



European
Commission

PANORAMA

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Cohesion Policy: 30 years investing in the future of European Regions

**NORTH RHINE-
WESTPHALIA:
A BIG PLAYER ON
THE NATIONAL AND
GLOBAL STAGE**



**MAINTAINING
THE TRADITIONAL
WHILE INVESTING
IN THE FUTURE IN
CROATIA**




COHESION 30

Regional and
Urban Policy

PANORAMA

In this issue ...

In this spring issue of *Panorama*, we mark the 30th anniversary of the creation of Cohesion Policy with two special features. A look back at the five programming periods shows, via maps and infographics, how the policy and the regions it serves have evolved over time. We also highlight 30 emblematic projects from across all Member States, showing the breadth and effectiveness of the investments made.

Our regional profile this time looks at North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany, with project profiles and an interview with Prof. Andreas Pinkwart, Minister for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy of North Rhine-Westphalia. We also explore ERDF's support for SMEs, Territorial Impact Assessments, and the Commission's new toolkit for integrating people with a migrant background. Elsewhere, we explain the collaboration between the EU and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein through the European Economic Area Agreement.

There is also an interview with Jacques Mézard, French Minister for Territorial Cohesion, who surveys the past, present and future of Cohesion Policy's impact in France. 'In Your Own Words' includes contributions from Tuscany, Brandenburg and the Atlantic Arc Cities association, and the projects section visits Estonia, Austria and Greece.

I wish you a pleasant read.



AGNÈS MONFRET

Head of Communication Unit, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission



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EDITORIAL

2018 is a special year for Cohesion Policy. In just three months, it will be celebrating its 30th anniversary on 24 June, exactly to the day when the first Cohesion Policy regulations were adopted.

Needless to say this is a great milestone. We have achieved so much together over these 30 years: growth, jobs, faster internet, improved accessibility, more and better hospitals, childcare and schools for our children, etc. In this issue of *Panorama*, you will find 30 impressive examples of how European regions have used Cohesion Policy to deliver a better life and a better future for their citizens. Because the good news is that each and every European region has been part of this success story; building on Cohesion Policy to take better advantage of the opportunities created by the largest internal market in the world.

Of course, today's Cohesion Policy is very different to the one we knew 30 years ago. Since then, 16 new Member States have joined the Union. Both challenges and funding priorities have evolved. For example, supporting the industrial transition of European regions is now becoming a major priority, as is support for migrant integration.

But one of the strengths of this policy is that it has always been able to learn from its successes and failures, and to continuously adapt to new times while remaining faithful to its original principles: support to the most disadvantaged regions, multi-year programming, strategically focused investments, and the involvement of regional and local partners



I would like to take this opportunity to pay a deep tribute to all those who have made and are making this policy possible every day. I am proud of the thousands of Cohesion Policy practitioners in our Member States and regions who ensure that EU funds work together and accompany project promoters in successfully delivering their projects. I am sure they are also proud of this policy.

Therefore, it is time to celebrate. But it is also time to capitalise on these achievements so that this policy can continue to serve our common European dream of shared peace, democracy, freedom, solidarity and prosperity for all.

In just a few weeks, the Commission will present its proposals for the coming multi-annual financial agreement and for the future Cohesion Policy post-2020. There will be a significant debate on what the EU's funding priorities should be for the new period. And I am glad that, in this context, we will be able to show thousands of concrete examples of how the European Union has changed the life of millions of citizens across our continent. So many thanks and happy birthday Cohesion Policy! ■

CORINA CREȚU

European Commissioner for Regional Policy

Adapting Cohesion Policy for future challenges in France

French Minister for Territorial Cohesion, Jacques Mézard, reflects on the relevance of Cohesion Policy past, present and future and the changes that will be needed to tackle the challenges facing France and the EU as a whole beyond 2020.



Conceived and implemented under the leadership of Jacques Delors in 1988, Cohesion Policy is now 30 years old. It has been continuously adapted while remaining faithful to the original principles: aid to the most disadvantaged regions, multi-year programming, strategically focused investments, and involvement of regional and local partners. Was it necessary to remain faithful to these principles throughout this entire period? Are they still relevant today?

Cohesion Policy is a building block of the European project, because reducing the gap between the different regions is a principle provided for in the preamble of the Treaty of Rome. This policy is the primary European investment policy, and it has had some major successes. It has helped to accelerate the rate at which new Member States catch up economically, and has supported investment during the crisis. Cohesion Policy is also an inclusive and dynamic development policy aimed at empowering territories with specific handicaps

to better leverage their strengths, both in the single market and in a globalised world. In order that the dynamics it promotes really continue to speak to everyone, this policy requires major adjustments or even reworking for the following reasons:

- › economic – Europe needs regions that are productive and radically transformed to ensure its sustainability;
- › social – the strength of its social cohesion and the quality of its human capital will be strategic factors; and
- › political – there is a risk of continent-wide social fragmentation.

The budget for Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 is at the heart of the debate. What is your view on where we find ourselves today in the debate, and what are your expectations?

The French authorities support a “pro-active budget for a sovereign Europe, which guarantees our security and prepares for the future of young Europeans” – a fairer and more predictable budget. They have confirmed both

their support for Cohesion Policy and their wish to see an in-depth reform of it. To better address the current territorial challenges, we want it to have a more precise focus and to be governed by greater social and fiscal convergence. For France, a strong Europe is the only option that makes sense so that tomorrow we can fully protect, defend and support our citizens in a globalised world.

To what extent do the current programmes help stimulate the French economy? What specific results do you hope to achieve by the end of the current programming period (2014-2020)?

Innovation is identified as one of the French economy’s main drivers of non-cost competitiveness. The intensity of R&D investment has slowed since the crisis and there is no doubt that it must be stimulated to strengthen the competitiveness of the sectors and prevent certain regions from dropping out. Another essential dimension for the attractiveness of the French economy

“ For France, a strong Europe is the only option that makes sense so that tomorrow we can fully protect, defend and support our citizens in a globalised world. ”

is the stability of the investment climate and the social cohesion to which the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) also contribute. Their implementation framework, which favours structured investments and offers guarantees, is also a contributing factor for investment security.

However, the impact of the ESIF in the territories depends on the amount of funds collected. Moreover, while in *ex-post* evaluation, it is possible to note the positive influence of the funds during the crisis in the French regions. However, we don't have enough perspective to illustrate the economic impact of the current programming. In fact, the ESIF rarely

operate in isolation. In concrete terms, we hope that these funds will make it possible to increase the share of R&D expenditure in France while at the same time reducing the gap between the French regions in terms of innovation, as well as employment and training.

You were Minister of Agriculture and are now Minister of Territorial Cohesion. Do you agree that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Funds (EAFRD) are intended to work even more closely in rural zones in the future (beyond 2020), for example, as regards

broadband? If creating a single fund does not seem an appropriate solution, should more integrated common modes of intervention not be sought, particularly in the interests of simplification?

My experience at the Ministry of Agriculture did not last very long, but as an elected representative from the Cantal department, I can confirm that the deployment of broadband is absolutely vital for economic development in the rural territories. This is why, in addition to the France Very High Speed [France Très Haut Débit] plan, many French regions have chosen to use European funds to accelerate its roll-out.



Installing a fibre-optic network - a major investment in France's regional infrastructure.

However, the complex design of the funds with their multiple priorities sometimes lacks transparency, and this needs to be addressed. The French authorities have expressed their expectations regarding simplification and they have also proposed initiatives to the European authorities. Indeed, we are counting on a profound simplification post-2020, which will require better harmonisation of the rules governing the various funds.

We need to be relatively vigilant on three points in particular and will have to ensure the legal certainty of the beneficiaries, the technical feasibility of the proposals, and that progress towards simplification at a community level does not lead to an increase in regulatory requirements at national level.

During the 2014-2020 period, France transferred responsibility for ERDF management from the prefectures to the regions (regional councils). What lessons have you

learned from this development? What, in your opinion, was the impact on the coordinating role of the state?

The current programming period has been a challenge for all parties involved. During this programming cycle, the regions had to meet the double challenge of implementing the management of programmes, the excessive complexity of which is only too well known and, for a majority of regions, managing the merger of French regions. The managing authorities have, on the whole, acquitted themselves of these new responsibilities with great professionalism. As for the coordinating authorities, they have had to provide management and regulatory support on a wide range of topics, provide technical expertise in inter-ministerial work, and ensure awareness of national positions in dialogues with the regions and in European institutions.

This process of dialogue and the system of work and cooperation between the state and the regions constructed around the management of the ESIF can certainly be perfected, although, regardless of what anyone says, it does work and produces results that are, on the whole, satisfactory.

The French Outermost Regions (ORs) (DOM) have to face many challenges, such as remoteness, insularity and problematic geographies. Is the special allocation an appropriate response to these challenges? Should the EU's response not be further 'structured' by anchoring it more deeply and more sustainably in support of the ERDF and even the European Social Fund (ESF)? What will French priorities be during the next negotiation in terms of taking into account the specificities of the ORs?

The ORs are an opportunity for the European Union. Their constraints and challenges are indeed numerous and

Roof-top view of Clermont-Ferrand with the imposing Puy de Dôme in the background.





Anne-Laure Morel is the owner of start-up Torskal in the French Outermost Region of La Réunion.

the situations of the different French ORs vary. However, the ORs also have unique potential and resources that are directly linked to strategic sectors for economies of the future (the green economy, blue economy or even the space economy). Unfortunately, these assets are not being sufficiently exploited.

Cohesion Policy and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) offer a diverse range of instruments and tools. The special OR allocation is one among many. In this context, given the significant local needs of the ORs, we want to make progress as quickly as possible on certain key issues related to agriculture, fishing, waste management, training and youth, mobility from and between these territories, and trade agreements. Following the consultations initiated within the framework of the Assises des Outremer, it is

within this context that innovative, structural and employment-generating projects will be proposed by the stakeholders and given the government's support next spring.

You are an elected representative of Cantal (Department of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region). Has the EU's Cohesion Policy had a significant impact on this territory? Could you highlight some projects that have been particularly beneficial for citizens?

The European Union's Cohesion Policy is complex, but for all our territories it represents a real opportunity: the average share of European funds in regional investment is 20% in mainland France and, in the case of Auvergne, the region I come from, this proportion reaches 76%. So yes, I can tell you that this policy is crucial for

public officials wanting to mobilise investors around structural projects in the regions! For example, in connection with agribusiness, the ERDF provided funding totalling EUR 150 000 for the 'MOPAD'¹⁾ R&D project led by BIOVITIS, which proposes the use of micro-organisms to combat diseases in wheat. On a different note, it also supported the development of collaborative workspaces for VSEs/SMEs, such as in the areas of Murat (EUR 195 000) and Salers (EUR 150 000). ■

1) *Micro-Organismes Pour une Agriculture Durable* [Micro-organisms for Sustainable Agriculture]

Toolkit to help people with a migrant background through EU funds

The Commission recently launched a toolkit to foster the coordination of EU funds for the integration of people with a migrant background.

Every morning, when you take the metro, you probably do not realise just who is driving the train and making sure you arrive safely at your destination. Later in the day, at the hospital, you may not realise who is taking your blood pressure and reminding you about the side effects of your medication. You may also not realise who is at the centre of your daughter's dream of becoming Romelu Lukaku in Belgium's national football team.

Let's be clear: it is very likely that all these people were either born outside of Europe or have parents who arrived from another continent. They may have arrived in Europe in many different ways. Whatever their journey, their children face numerous challenges at school, especially if they are in a segregated school.

Mindful of the gap

In 2016, 4.1% of the entire EU population did not have Member State nationality and 7% of those living in the EU were born outside of it. Data indicates there is still a significant and growing socio-economic gap between people with a migrant background and mainstream society. The following gaps are particularly striking:

- › In 2016, the EU-28 unemployment rate for migrants born outside the EU remained 8.4 percentage points higher than the rate for the native-born population.
- › As early as the end of primary school education, children with a migrant background achieve substantially lower scores than other children. Furthermore, children with a migrant background are over-represented in schools for special education.

Despite these key challenges, studies indicate that immigration is associated with a positive contribution to the public finances and welfare of the host Member State (whereby all high-skilled



and low-skilled people in society benefit), depending on a migrant's initial level of skills and the duration of their integration in the labour market.

Europe is one of the wealthiest places on earth. We have at our disposal a wide range of resources and tools to facilitate the integration of people with a migrant background. In particular, the amount of EU funds available for the Member States is significant (see figure below).

Fit for purpose

To use the EU funds to their full potential, Commissioner Crețu, together with Georges Dassis, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, recently launched a 'Toolkit on the use of EU funds for the integration of people with a migrant background'.

“The aim of fostering cohesive and inclusive societies regardless of ethnicity, nationality, legal status, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability is reflected in the European Union's values and principles. We therefore should be aware of the potential labour market contribution of the 20 million third-country nationals legally residing in the European Union.”

Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy

Its creation follows a number of key priorities identified by the Commission: in particular, the need to support the integration of people with a migrant background according to the principles of equal treatment and the need for better coordination of EU funds.

THE TERM 'PEOPLE WITH A MIGRANT BACKGROUND' REFERS TO:

- third-country nationals;
- applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection;
- stateless people;
- people with undetermined nationality;
- EU citizens with a migrant background.

It should be noted that mobile EU citizens are not included in this category.

As Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, said: "Investing in integration policies today is key to making sure Europe stays a prosperous, cohesive and inclusive society in the future." This toolkit will help funding authorities across the Member States to improve their use of EU funding for integration, by better

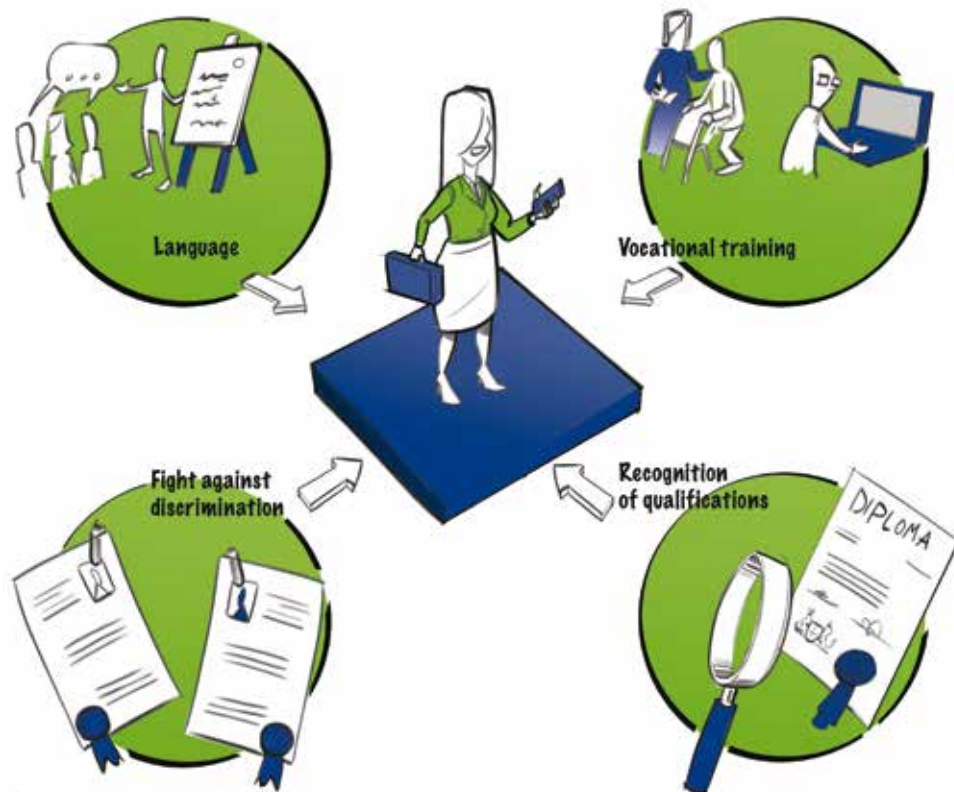
coordinating the use of funds and strengthening their synergies. In this way, with the support of the EU funds, funding authorities will further contribute to reducing inequalities and ensuring equal treatment of people with a migrant background.

The toolkit makes some practical recommendations on the management of EU funds, in particular by focusing on their synergies. It further highlights some pressing challenges, yet to be fully addressed, in education, employment, housing, reception and access to basic mainstream services, where they are best suited to contribute. More attention should be paid to the social and physical isolation of people with a migrant background, especially the most vulnerable, such as the homeless, the stateless, lone parents, and others.

EU funds are available for national, regional and local authorities. The Commission is ready to further support Member States to maximise the potential of these funds. Subsequently, it is prepared to update the toolkit with some more practical recommendations, following implementation of the projects across the Member States. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://europa.eu/!gT84Bc>





Maintaining the traditional while investing in the future

The refurbished St Mihovil Fortress in Šibenik, Croatia

During the programming of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MMF) for Croatia, it is particularly important that the status of traditional policies – Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy – is retained. The Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, Gabrijela Žalac, explains Croatia's position in relation to the future of the Cohesion Policy beyond 2020, presenting the country's position and clearly setting out its priorities.

I believe it is essential that Cohesion Policy remains an effective tool for the EU which will continue to reduce significant economic, social and territorial disparities and strengthen the global competitiveness of the European economy. It enables economic growth and sustainable development and is considered a vital source of public investment in Croatia. Apart from active participation in EU institutions, Croatia is also part of the expanded Visegrád Group where it actively contributes to discussions about the future of Cohesion Policy.

From 2015 to 2017, the estimated percentage contribution of Cohesion Policy in public investment in Croatia was 80%, which is very high compared to

the EU-28 average of 8.5%. This is a clear indication that increases in the national component of co-financing varies from country to country and that each Member State will react according to their circumstances.

National co-financing certainly contributes to all stakeholders' feeling of ownership. However, given the significant disparities in development between different countries and regions, any increase would not lend added value to the Cohesion Policy. Thus, we support maintaining the current minimum national co-financing rate in national European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) envelopes and contributions from national budgets.

“As regards key elements of the future Cohesion Policy, I believe that prioritising investment is crucial. Croatia continues to strongly support the ‘traditional’ Cohesion Policy priorities, being funded under the current programming period, given that they hold the same interest for us post-2020.”

Priority perspectives

As regards key elements of the future Cohesion Policy, I believe that prioritising investment is crucial. Croatia continues to strongly support the ‘traditional’ Cohesion Policy priorities, being funded under the current programming period, given that they hold the same interest for us post-2020.

In terms of the MFF, we support retaining the current seven-year duration since long-term predictability is a must because of the time needed to harmonise legislation and adopt operational programmes.



Furthermore, the current N+3 rule is appropriate and an additional three years for the absorption of funds after allocation is optimal.

As regards Cohesion Policy implementation instruments, we support maintaining grants as the main instrument of implementation, although it is also necessary to consider evaluations that indicate financial instruments can be used efficiently, in particular in combination with grants in financially viable investment policy areas.

I would also like to note the importance of European territorial cooperation as an excellent platform for developing coordinated and strategic cooperation at all levels, with partners from other European countries and regions.

There is certainly a need to continue to recognise shortcomings, ensure synergy and complementarity between ESIF and other EU funds, and improve the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy implementation. Therefore, we expect a simpler transition between programming periods and a faster start to the new financial period to ensure continuity of investment. ■

Gabrijela Žalac, Minister for Regional Development and EU Funds of Croatia



North Rhine-Westphalia – a big player on the national and global stage

Europe's most densely populated region, North Rhine-Westphalia boasts an outstanding economy within the EU and close ties with neighbouring countries. However, it still has a lot of catching up to do to create an environment better suited to research activities, innovative companies and start-ups with high growth potential.

As one of Germany's 16 federal states, North Rhine-Westphalia shares 9.5% of the area and around 21% of the country's population and gross domestic product. Its central location in the heart of Europe on the trans-European corridors of the Rhine Alps and North Sea-Baltic, and its role as the industrial backbone of the large Belgian and Dutch seaports, make the region an outstanding economic region within the EU.

The region's economy is predominantly intertwined on an international level and is globally oriented. In 2017, its imports and exports amounted to EUR 419.8 billion. International trade accounts for over 60% of the region's GDP. Even in times of increasing globalisation, two-thirds of North Rhine-Westphalia's exports still go to European countries, in particular to the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom.

In recent years, there has been a dynamic evolution in export shipments from North Rhine-Westphalia to the Central and Eastern European countries of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. The United States and China are by far the most important non-European markets for the region.

Global player

North Rhine-Westphalian companies enjoy success on the world market with a variety of products. In 2017, the region's most important exports were chemical products, machinery, metals,

motor vehicles and vehicle parts. Traditionally, its particularly significant sectors, such as mechanical engineering and the chemical industry, achieve much of their turnover abroad.

Although it is not on the coast, the fact that North Rhine-Westphalia has close connections with the ZARA ports¹ and two international airports means it plays an important distribution function for the entire Federal Republic. The main country of origin for North Rhine-Westphalian imports is the Netherlands, followed by China, France and Belgium.

Due to its high population and its central location in Europe, North Rhine-Westphalia is the most important location for foreign direct investment in Germany. According to the German Federal Bank, it accounts for 29.5% of the total direct investment in Germany, giving it a significant lead among the federal states, ahead of Hesse and Bavaria. Over 19000 foreign companies coordinate their German and European operations from the region. The United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Japan, France and China are among the most important investor countries in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Foreign companies, in particular, appreciate the short route it can provide to potential customers: about 160 million people, nearly a third of all consumers in the EU, live within a radius of 500 km from the regional capital of Düsseldorf.

1) Ports of Zeebrugge, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Antwerp

Furthermore, north Rhine-Westphalia has one of the densest research scenes in Europe. It is home to six of the 10 largest universities in Germany and over 70 higher education institutions.

Good neighbours

The metropolitan region of the Rheinland and the Ruhr metropolises are by far the most populous metropolitan areas in Germany, accounting for a combined figure of around 11 million inhabitants. The cities within the metropolitan region are closely networked in a polycentric regional structure. This, as well as their close proximity, necessitates close collaboration across administrative boundaries.

Similar considerations apply to those areas that border Belgium and the Netherlands, where cooperation and good-neighbourly relations stretch beyond the region's borders.

Although North Rhine-Westphalia is economically stronger than average in European terms, bottlenecks and deficits still exist in key areas. Overcoming these will provide opportunities for smart, sustainable and inclusive development during the current EU funding period. Despite the high density of higher education institutions, a comparison with the rest of the country shows that companies in the region are lagging behind in research and investment activities. In addition, research activities in North Rhine-Westphalia still focus too little on major economic and social challenges, such as digitisation and new mobility.

When compared nationally, North Rhine-Westphalia still has a lot of catching up to do in terms of innovative companies and start-ups with high growth potential. SMEs make insufficient use of important growth potential, for example in terms of internationalisation or resource and energy efficiency, and they consider themselves confronted with barriers to growth (commercial space, bureaucracy and insufficient infrastructures).

Adapting to change

As a strong energy region, it is particularly affected by greenhouse gas emissions. In the context of the energy revolution, the issues of renewable energies and grid stability present particular challenges.

North Rhine-Westphalia also struggles with strong regional and sectoral disparities as a result of profound structural changes in recent decades. The dismantling and reconstruction of industrial structures, the consequences of this conversion,

the reconstruction accelerated by the energy revolution, and demographic changes all alter the economic and social foundations of many cities and regions. Social problems in the large cities and urban neighbourhoods result from poverty and exclusion. The disparities require concepts that counteract these changes.

European regions are currently experiencing a structural change which is characterised by, among other things, digitisation, the energy revolution, demographic trends and globalisation. North Rhine-Westphalia will be strongly affected by these structural changes for the foreseeable future.

Simply as a result of its central location and strong international interdependence, the region is exposed to global and European trends in a particular way. Challenges and opportunities arise from this. Successes that can be achieved by North Rhine-Westphalia throughout this change will impact on other European regions as a result of the region's cosmopolitan attitude, its economic power, and tight integration with its neighbours. ■



The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) makes a significant contribution to meeting regional challenges and to smart, sustainable and inclusive development in North Rhine-Westphalia. North Rhine-Westphalia's ERDF Operational Programme, totalling EUR 2.42 billion for the current 2014-2020 funding period (of which half is European funding), is the largest economic and structural policy funding programme for North Rhine-Westphalia. This Programme targets growth and promotes employment, setting a decisive course for a successful future. The largest share of Programme funding – 38% or EUR 931 million (50% EU funding) – is used to strengthen research, technological developments and innovation; 14%, or EUR 349 million, contributes to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs. A quarter of the Programme funding – EUR 582 million – is used to reduce CO₂ emissions and a fifth of the funding (EUR 465 million) is invested in sustainable urban and neighbourhood development and social prevention.

Innovation is a key theme

Professor Dr Andreas Pinkwart, Minister for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitisation and Energy for the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, discusses the significance of EU regional policy for the economy.



Minister, the managing authority for the ERDF in North Rhine-Westphalia is located in your ministry. Does it make sense, and is it necessary, to use European funding such as the ERDF for strengthening economic and social cohesion in a comparatively well-off region such as North Rhine-Westphalia?

The European Union's cohesion objective is, among other things, targeted at regions that are undergoing structural change. In recent decades, the North Rhine-Westphalian economy has changed massively, and not only in the mining and steel industries. The ERDF has contributed substantially to overcoming the problems associated with this. With the increased pace of digitisation, we are currently experiencing a new wave of structural change. This is also being felt by companies in North Rhine-Westphalia which have

a long tradition of close relationships with the European and global economy. The Structural Funds should be used in a forward-looking way, and should focus on current and future challenges.

The majority of the North Rhine-Westphalia ERDF programme is used for research and innovation to increase implementation-oriented R&I potential and to help companies become more innovative. How does European funding help in this regard?

Innovation is a key theme. Not only are we an important industrial location in Europe, but we also benefit from a uniquely high density of higher education and research institutions. From my years of experience as a higher education teacher and headmaster, one thing is very important to me: research results and great projects

should not remain in scientific institutions – rather, they must be applied to the economy and to society. With higher education spin-offs, we are determined that good ideas are carried through to the economy and develop into success stories. A good example is the StreetScooter electric van developed at RWTH Aachen University, thousands of which are now used by Deutsche Post DHL.

Almost a fifth of the ERDF funds are used in North Rhine-Westphalia for sustainable city and neighbourhood development. Could you describe the development strategy pursued by North Rhine-Westphalia, and how projects supported by EU funds improve everyday life in the region?

Despite its good economic performance, North Rhine-Westphalia is characterised by great spatial differences.

“With intensive cross-border cooperation for 25 years now, the European ideal is becoming tangible and real and we are promoting the expansion of the common economic area.”

In densely-populated areas, such as the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan area, these differences are apparent within small areas. If statistics are collated for larger regions, this often hides the situation in individual city districts. Many neighbourhoods urgently require help so that they can tackle their problems effectively and sustainably.

The ERDF North Rhine-Westphalia Operational Programme is therefore based on an integrated approach which handles the combined economic, social and ecological issues on a local basis. The inherent complexity of this approach needs time. In future, we need such territorially integrated measures to be implemented with less administrative complexity, so that the participants have more time to carry out the work involved. With our investments in the environment and fighting climate change, we would like not only to contribute to global targets but also to improve our citizens' quality of life.

Does North Rhine-Westphalia also benefit from European Territorial Cooperation programmes or initiatives?

Stakeholders are networking on an ever-more international basis in the internal European market and beyond. North Rhine-Westphalia benefits from this through its attractive location bordering Belgium and the Netherlands. Therefore, cooperation with our European neighbours

under European Territorial Cooperation is especially significant for our state. With intensive cross-border cooperation for 25 years now, the European ideal is becoming tangible and real and we are promoting the expansion of the common economic area.

Our focus is clear: the state government wants to support research and development and make small and medium-sized enterprises more competitive. At the same time, we also want citizens to experience the advantages of European cooperation in their everyday life. For example, projects are helping border commuters with administrative questions, with learning the language of their neighbours, and with engaging in cross-border civil society.

What are your wishes and ideas for criteria, themes and funding approaches for Cohesion Policy after 2020?

We are examining the proposals for the EU's future multi-annual financial frameworks and Cohesion Policy in great detail, and taking an active role in the discussions. Recently, the German Bundesrat took a position on the Reflection Papers,

including the future of structural funding. North Rhine-Westphalia actively participated in this as it is of the greatest importance to us that the processes are simplified so that the funding reaches its recipients quickly and without complication. Complex approval and checking processes prevent regions from becoming sustainable.

To make an effective regional policy possible, we need adequate financing for all regions. Half of our programmes are currently financed from EU funds and half from state and project partner funds – further reduction in the European share would call their implementation into doubt. ■

**Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Innovation,
Digitalisierung und Energie
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen**



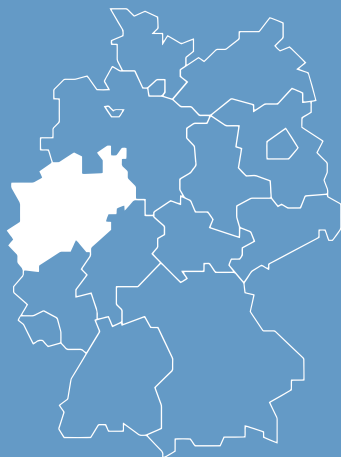
North Rhine-Westphalia

POPULATION: North Rhine-Westphalia borders Lower Saxony to the north and north-east, Hesse to the south-east, Rhineland-Palatinate to the south and Belgium and the Netherlands to the west. Just under 2 million of its 17.9 million inhabitants (2016) are foreign nationals. The Rhine-Ruhr conurbation, with around 10 million inhabitants, is one of the 30 largest metropolitan areas in the world.

ECONOMY: The region's GDP of EUR 647 067 million (2015), or EUR 36 500 per capita, is 126% of the EU average (2015). In 2015, R&D expenditure was 1.96 % of GDP. North Rhine-Westphalia is an important industrial region and Europe's number-one region for energy, generating around a third of Germany's electricity. Of Germany's 50 largest companies, 25 have head offices in North Rhine-Westphalia. It is also Europe's most important commercial centre where many of Germany's largest retail companies are headquartered.

LABOUR MARKET: The job market varies considerably across the region, ranging from some structurally weak cities, particularly in the Ruhr area, to the dynamic Rhineland region along the Düsseldorf, Cologne and Bonn axis. In February 2017, the unemployment rate in North Rhine-Westphalia was 7.7%, while the national rate stood at 6.3%. The main sources of employment include: manufacturing (metals and electrical equipment); wholesale and retail trade; maintenance and repair of motor vehicles; and residential care and social work.

KEY SECTORS: The central Rhine-Ruhr region is the country's most important industrial, mining and energy-producing area. Bituminous coal deposits are mined along the Ruhr and around Aachen, and lignite is mined west of Cologne, although many coal mines have been closed. Petroleum refineries on the Ruhr and Rhine are connected to the North Sea ports by pipelines. The region's raw steel production accounts



for most of Germany's production, and chemicals, textiles, glass, heavy machinery, electrical equipment, precision instruments, and beer are also produced along the Ruhr. In the southern part of the Rhine-Ruhr region, iron and metallurgical industries and textiles play a major role. Following changes in both its economic structure and image, it is now one of Germany's most important high-technology centres.

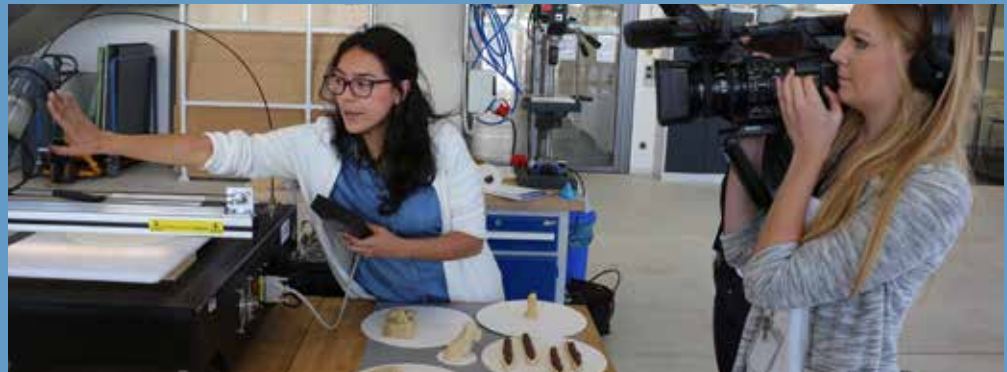
Much of the area outside the Ruhr is devoted to commercial farms, gardens and orchards. Wheat and sugar beet are grown in the southern lowlands, fruit and vegetables in the north, and cattle and pig breeding are important in Münsterland and the lower Rhine.

SMART SPECIALISATION: Following restructuring, the region's industrial policy now focuses on eight lead markets where it has strengths thanks to smart specialisation: new materials, machinery and plant engineering/production technology, health, information and communication technologies, mobility and logistics, energy and environment, life sciences, and media and creative industries. North Rhine-Westphalia is also developing a technology-transfer strategy especially for SMEs, universities and research organisations, linking lead markets via a research-oriented approach.



LOWER RHINE 3D CENTRE OF COMPETENCE: ADDITIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN MANUFACTURING

3D printing has a great potential for middle-market business, covering everything from prototyping to producing the end products. New products can be developed and manufactured more quickly. To integrate the '3D printing' theme in their studies and anchor it in the region, the three North



Rhine-Westphalian universities of Rhein-Waal, Ruhr West and RWTH Aachen have adapted the FabLab concept.

FabLab is a high-tech workshop which individually and collectively uses personal manufacturing and encourages its dissemination. The linking of open innovation processes with personal manufacturing technologies is part of a long-term vision characterised by individual and decentralised product development and manufacturing.

use the FabLabs production opportunities. Its central task is to ensure the long-term integration of digital manufacturing competencies in different study courses. Another focus is to establish the FAB Academy, MIT's international training programme based on digital manufacturing.

Furthermore, employees at the 3D Centre of Competence establish contacts with companies using or interested in 3D technologies to develop educational material for industry and trade. They are also in contact with teachers and schools to develop teaching materials and workshops.

The Lower Rhine 3D Competence and Training Centre brings together important drivers of innovation from science, established companies and start-ups, enabling them to use applications in additive manufacturing for the benefit of the economy and society.

Working together as project partners, the three universities are building a central 3D Competence and Further Education Centre in the Lower Rhine to serve as the hub for existing initiatives and to

FUNDING

EUR 3 714 287 total investment,
of which:
EUR 1 857 143 of ERDF funding
EUR 1 485 715 of NRW
regional funding

PROJECT PARTNERS

Hochschule Rhein-Waal
Hochschule Ruhr West
RHTWH Aachen

EHRENFELD DESIGN QUARTER: THE BASIS FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

The 'Made in Cologne-Ehrenfeld' seal is well on the way to being disseminated nationwide. This is happening thanks to the ideas and dedication of the Ehrenfeld Design Quarter (DQE), an initiative tasked with making the Cologne-Ehrenfeld site a centre for creativity and young design. By enabling young creatives to gather in one space to collaborate, the initiative has succeeded in creating new forms of working and value creation, as well as innovative ideas and products.

Cologne-Ehrenfeld is a shining example of a dynamic place for young internationals and experimental design. The small-scale, post-industrial and intercultural infrastructure

is predestined to build an innovative and experimental environment for creative small businesses, design and innovative technologies, as well as for alternative marketing, communication and tourism. The action plan was created with the aim of spatially adapting the existing buildings for their own purposes and establishing the conceptual basis for a founding quarter and design competence centre.

FUNDING

EUR 976 637 total investment,
of which:
EUR 483 900 ERDF funding
EUR 290 339 NRW regional funding

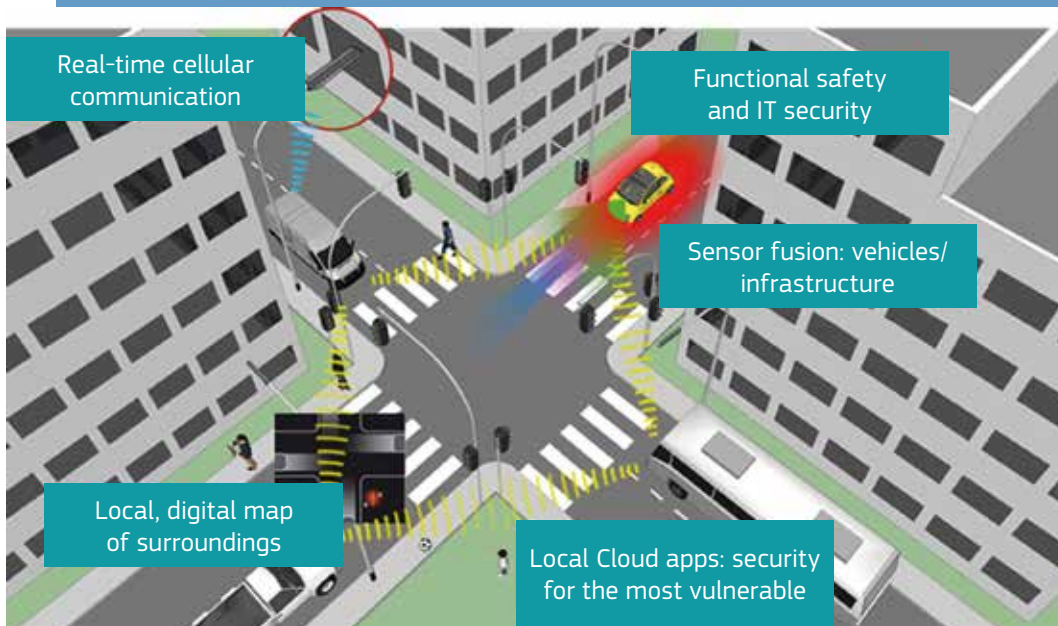
PROJECT PARTNERS

Ehrenfeld Design Quarter, Cologne
<http://www.d-q-e.net/>

The DQE has succeeded in encouraging young national and international designers to settle down and build a social-creative community. The initiative also offers training courses and workshops on new areas of design, as well as information ranging from funding opportunities to accessing loans and venture capital.

By concentrating creative work in one quarter and mixing diverse influences, the DQE can evoke the true meaning behind the Made in Cologne-Ehrenfeld seal: new and quality products, new jobs, changing value chains and alternative models of working.

INVERSIIV: AUTONOMOUS DRIVING IN MEGACITIES



The question is not if, but rather when automated driving will fully take hold in our society. The first signs are already there: we accept lane-departure warning systems, lane-change assistants, braking assistants, and much more as the norm. Recently, technical progress has put other important milestones in place which, to a large extent, make fully automated driving possible.

While driving on the motorway is relatively problem free most of the time, city

driving poses an enormous challenge for systems which are not yet up to the job. The region of North Rhine-Westphalia, with its many motorways and large, high-volume-traffic cities, is a prime example. The number of variables and factors in megacities to which the systems must adapt and which must then be correctly interpreted and implemented, is just too great.

However, this means that whoever controls urban traffic will dominate the rest. The InVerSiv project is a specific response to this challenge, aiming to build an “intelligent transport infrastructure for secure networked driving in megacities”. To achieve this, researchers are collating as much existing data as possible to make fully automated driving safer.

Vehicles’ sensors can be networked with the road infrastructure, which is also equipped with sensors for environment detection. In conjunction with further information from local and global centres, a comprehensive picture of the environment or surroundings is created.

Traffic signals that communicate with cars, cars that communicate with each other, local cloud apps that also link into the system – all of these are helping automated urban driving to become a reality. Test sites in real-world environments also indicate whether the researchers’ findings can be translated into real-world situations, made available to other projects, and will remain available after project end.

While driving on the motorway is relatively problem free most of the time, city driving poses an enormous challenge for systems which are not yet up to the job. The region of North Rhine-Westphalia, with its many motorways and large, high-volume-traffic cities, is a prime example. The number of variables and factors in megacities to which the systems must adapt and which must then be correctly interpreted and implemented, is just too great.

FUNDING

EUR 1 720 304 total investment of which:

EUR 1 320 991 of ERDF funding
EUR 399 313 of NRW regional funding

PROJECT PARTNERS

CommAgility Ltd
adesso AG
Technical University of Dortmund
Wilhelm Schröder GmbH
SGS-TÜV Saar GmbH

XTC-ID EXTREME TEMPERATURE RFID TRANSPONDER

Most people can recognise a bar code, which is not only useful at the shop checkouts but also for warehouse management. Likewise, packages sent by post are frequently given a bar or QR code. However, these codes can be damaged by the weather, transportation, etc.

Since the so-called RFID transponder is not affected in the same way, its application is growing in the logistics sector. Conventional technology is suitable for temperatures up to 125 °C, but not for extreme conditions or severe environmental impacts. High temperatures are often reached in the packaging and manufacturing industries, particularly when producing plastics.

The XTC-ID project partners, a consortium of companies under the leadership of IMST GmbH in Kamp-Lintfort and the University of Twente, are developing a new RFID chip within the framework of Interreg.



FUNDING

EUR 3 569 579 total investment
of which:
EUR 1 784 789 of ERDF funding
EUR 266 925 of NRW co-financing

PROGRAMME

Interreg Germany-Netherlands
cooperation programme

This will enable safe and reproducible identification under extreme environmental conditions, such as high or low temperature ranges. The aim is to provide applications and markets with very robust and unique 'eXtreme temperature chip ID technology' for scenarios where conventional identification systems are of little or no use.

SMART SERVICE POWER: GROWING OLDER BUT REMAINING INDEPENDENT

People are getting older and are no longer as fit as they were in their youth. There are far too few care-givers to adequately provide for all the elderly and needy people today, and the cost of welfare and public services is rocketing. Developers working on the Smart Service Power project are harnessing progressive digitalisation by connecting intelligent systems to facilitate age-appropriate, technology-supported living which allows people to remain independent for as long as possible.

The project team and partners are using smart and interconnected devices to bring together and combine many technologies which often need to be simplified in their application or require interfaces with one another. The most important applications are used to monitor falls, measure fluid balance and medication intake, and to monitor vital signs. These applications are carried out by special sensor systems provided by the current applied

research. They include, for example, intelligent fall sensors integrated into ceiling lighting, blood pressure monitors that send their results to a database, and emergency systems to monitor a person's health and raise the alarm if there is a problem.

By bringing all these systems together, the developers of Smart Service Power can recognise processes, connections and changes and actively react to them, or prevent difficult or dangerous situations from the outset. Intelligent programmes identify emergencies in the home and determine the needs of those living alone. The researchers are also investigating how such a system can function economically to develop suitable proposals for business models.

FUNDING

EUR 1 384 386 total investment
of which:
EUR 692 193 of ERDF funding
EUR 276 877 of NRW regional funding

PROJECT PARTNERS

VIVAI Software AG (consortium lead)
University of Applied Sciences
Dortmund
DOGEWO 21
Fraunhofer-InHaus-Center
Hüberthal Nursing Service
Dortmund InHaus GmbH

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

PANORAMA
welcomes your
contributions!

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

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

EU Cohesion Policy post-2020: supporting new and traditional demands

In Brandenburg, EU Cohesion Policy has contributed significantly to the success of the transformation process since German reunification in 1991 and to strengthening competitiveness and employment in the region. Thanks to this support, Brandenburg has been included in the funding category for transitional regions since 2014.

Despite its positive development, the region will still require the support of the EU even after 2020 in order to consolidate its achievements to date and further promote them. The goal of a self-sustaining economic structure has not been reached and various development gaps, such as the low level of research and innovation in the private sector and insufficient integration in international economic cycles, will not be fully complete by 2020.

For regions such as Brandenburg in the east of Germany, there is also a need to mitigate the negative consequences of



Katrin Müller-Wartig,
Head of Unit, EU Economic and Financial
Policies, EU Funds Coordination
Ministry of Justice, European Affairs
and Consumer Protection,
Brandenburg, Germany

being 'sandwiched' between the highly developed regions in the west of Germany and areas that receive maximum EU funding in neighbouring Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, Brandenburg requests that the Cohesion Policy is continued for all European regions after 2020. As the EU's most important investment policy, it should maintain its prominent role in

“ Because of Cohesion Policy projects, the EU has become a visible and tangible entity for local people. This is your special European added value. ”

the multi-annual financial framework. It acts as a transmission belt for EU objectives and priorities in European regions. Furthermore, because of Cohesion Policy projects, the EU has become a visible and tangible entity for local people. This is your special European added value.

While Cohesion Policy should continue to focus on the less-developed regions, Brandenburg believes it is necessary to increase the amount of funding available for transitional and more-developed regions under the policy. These regions contribute more than average to economic strength and the achievement of EU-wide objectives. Regions currently assigned as transitional must

be supported through targeted effective investments in favour of less-developed areas.

Brandenburg considers the introduction of a separate fund to promote national structural reforms at the expense of the Cohesion Policy, or a Cohesion Policy focus on general government structural reforms, to be extremely critical. Structural reforms can only work in a sustainable manner if they are supported locally by targeted

structural measures, such as the promotion of innovation, support for SMEs, or ensuring skilled specialists. Increasing resources for national structural reforms at the expense of such Cohesion Policy measures on a regional level would be counterproductive.

The future multi-annual financial framework must – despite the initial difficulties posed by Brexit – meet the numerous new challenges facing the

EU. Thus, Brandenburg calls for the EU to be financially strengthened to avoid important new EU priorities in areas such as energy and climate policy, migration and security being forced to compete with the traditional remit of the EU Cohesion Policy. ■

Adequate funding is crucial for Europe's cohesion

Cohesion Policy, the EU's main investment policy, has a key role in implementing its strategic priorities on research and innovation, energy and environment, competitiveness of production systems and social inclusion. Cutting the budget for Cohesion Policy after 2020 would mean losing its 'raison d'être'.

The EU is facing new challenges, such as defence, immigration and security, which have a significant financial impact on the new budget that will also be conditioned by Brexit.

The European Commission has invited Member States to raise their contributions to the EU Multiannual Financial Framework from the current 1.03% to about 1.15% of their GDP.

“I am very concerned about these potential reductions that will signify an irreversible blow to the future of Cohesion Policy and increase regional disparities across Europe.”

I fully support this request to increase the EU budget, which provides for longer-term planning and the stability needed for investments.

However, even if Member States agree to increase their EU budget contribution, cuts of 15% or even 30% are still a possibility for the post-2020 period.



Enrico Rossi,
President of Tuscany
Vice President of the Conference
of Peripheral Maritime Regions
in charge of Cohesion Policy,
Italy

I am very concerned about these potential reductions that will signify an irreversible blow to the future of Cohesion Policy and increase regional disparities across Europe. Maintaining an ambitious budget for Cohesion Policy for all regions is crucial to ensure that the EU continues to support its goals of cohesion, solidarity and investment in all EU regions.

Furthermore, cohesion is a prerequisite to ensure the competitiveness of the single market, and it favours convergence between different territories in terms of

objectives and territorial development policies, as well as the sharing of administrative methods and practices.

The Commission is also proposing to establish a structural reform instrument with a budget of around EUR 25 billion that could be a part of Cohesion Policy in the future, even though it will provide direct budgetary support to Member States. This proposal is very worrying, as it raises too many questions regarding

the legitimacy of such an instrument, how it will function, and its democratic accountability.

Negotiations between the Council and the Parliament will begin in earnest as soon as the Commission issues its long-awaited proposal on the next EU budget on 2 May, with the expectation that an agreement will be reached by May 2019, before the European elections.

Although I am convinced that we need a more efficient Cohesion Policy, an adequate financial envelope is necessary – at least equal to the current one – with contributions coming either from new forms of own resources, or from a deeply revised version of current ones that are no longer capable of meeting the EU's current political and institutional needs. ■

Cohesion means cohesion



Tamara Espiñeira,
Secretary-General of the Conference
of Atlantic Arc Cities
Member of the Structured Dialogue
with ESIF partners group of experts

The budget debate should concentrate on essential policies which are already effective, rather than hunting for miracle solutions. At the present time, we need ambition and not retreat, investment and not saving, solidarity and not cuts. Speeches should be

consistent with means and resources, therefore the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) must target at least 1.3 % of gross national income.

Furthermore, as evident as it may seem, it must be remembered that cohesion means cohesion. Surely, a reform of the Treaties is necessary, although it should not be forced through the MFF. As our president José Maria Costa reminded us in February, cohesion is the practical translation of subsidiarity (article 5 TEU). And this major principle is non-negotiable. Therefore, if the EU is to respect its own values, cohesion cannot be restricted to a symbolic envelope inside a figurative budget. At a time where uncertainty is predominant, the pillars of the EU should be preserved.

In order to increase the efficiency of Cohesion Policy, it is fundamental to carry on with efforts regarding flexibility, simplification and coordination, thereby contributing, I insist, to

“ In order to increase the efficiency of Cohesion Policy, it is fundamental to carry on with efforts regarding flexibility, simplification and coordination, thereby contributing, I insist, to meaningful subsidiarity. ”

meaningful subsidiarity. In the same way, the partnership principle must be consolidated and enshrined in the regulations.

Looking towards a more cohesive Europe, territorial cooperation seems the best tool. Cross-border cooperation is fundamental; whereas the importance of transnational cooperation must not be ignored. Even with some difficulties, macro-regions have demonstrated their

beneficial influence on the territories. Thus these dynamics should be maintained and spread (i.e. for the Atlantic Arc).

Moreover, both Cohesion Policy and the MFF should not forget the EU's urban structure. During the next period, the European Urban Agenda must contribute, with its own allocation, to constructing a real urban policy and should not just be

limited to perishable instruments (such as partnerships) or to communicating good practice. The same applies to a strong maritime policy. The 'sea opportunity' has been identified as a major source of growth, so after 2020, the MFF ought to seize the blue opportunity.

As a footnote, I might add that, last year, those same reflections drove us,

together with the Iberian Cross-Border Association (RIET), Medcities and the Adriatic and Ionian Forum (FAIC), to create a platform called 'Cities for Cooperation'. The territorial urban networks are thus currently working together for a more cohesive Europe. ■



NEWS [IN BRIEF]

COMMISSION HELPS MORE INDUSTRIAL REGIONS BUILD RESILIENT, COMPETITIVE ECONOMIES

The Commission has selected seven additional EU regions and Member States for tailored assistance under the pilot call on industrial transition launched in December 2017: Cantabria (Spain), Centre-Val de Loire (France), East-North Finland, Grand Est (France) and Greater Manchester (United Kingdom)

as well as Lithuania and Slovenia. These join five regions that were already selected in December 2017: Hauts-de-France (FR), Norra Mellansverige (North-Middle Sweden), Piemonte (Italy), Saxony (Germany) and Wallonia (Belgium).

The selected authorities will be able to develop or redesign strategies for regional economic transformation based on their smart specialisation priorities. Tailored assistance will be offered by the Commission services,

external experts and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to help prepare for the jobs of the future, broaden innovation, support the transition to a low-carbon economy, encourage entrepreneurship and promote inclusive growth.

The strategies for regional transformation should be ready by the end of 2018. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://europa.eu/!JY97UP>



REGIOSTARS AWARDS 2018: TIME TO SUBMIT YOUR BEST PROJECTS

RegioStars Awards identify good practices in regional development and highlight original and innovative projects that are attractive and inspiring to other regions. The categories for the 2018 have just been announced and are as follows:

The Award Categories for 2018 are:

- Supporting smart industrial transition;



- Achieving sustainability through low carbon emissions;
- Creating better access to public services;
- Tackling migration challenges;

- Topic of the year 2018: Investing in cultural heritage.

Applications can be submitted until April 15th. Please note that this year 2 projects can be submitted per programme by the project manager, with the endorsement of the managing authority. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.regiostarsawards.eu/login.php>

Cohesion Policy: 30 years of investing in the future of European regions

Cohesion Policy is central to European unity. It stems from the idea that policies aimed at integrating markets should be complemented by policies ensuring that all EU Member States, regions and citizens can benefit from integration.

Community policies to address economic and social imbalances have been in place since the Treaty of Rome, initially supported by around 4% of the EU budget. After the Single European Act, the setting up of the Cohesion Policy in 1988, followed by successive enlargements of the Union, resulted in a substantial increase in funding over the years. It now accounts for over one third of the EU budget.

EU Cohesion Policy is based on four principles:

- › Concentration on a limited number of objectives with the focus on the least-developed regions;
- › Multi-annual programming based on analysis, strategic planning and evaluation;
- › Additionality ensuring that Member States do not substitute national with EU expenditure;
- › Partnership in the design and implementation of programmes involving national, sub-national and EU actors.

Cohesion Policy has evolved from a policy aimed at compensating regions for their handicaps to a policy designed to improve growth, competitiveness and foster job creation. It supports development strategies that cover a wide range of factors affecting regional social, economic and environmental outcomes. It is now linked more directly to other EU policies, including macroeconomic governance.



COHESION30

“ For me, regional policy is above all an instrument for development, which has the added value of a redistribution effect. ”



Jacques Delors
Former President of the European Commission*

* Interview published in Panorama 43, Autumn 2012

30 projects

In pages 25 to 39, you will discover 30 exemplary projects to celebrate 30 years of Cohesion Policy. They show how EU Structural and Cohesion Funds are making a real difference to people's quality of life. There is one project from each of the 28 Member States, plus two examples illustrating crossborder cooperation, which has always been an important feature of Cohesion Policy.

30 years in maps and stats

Pages 40 to 49 present an overview of how EU Cohesion Policy has evolved during five successive programming periods over the last 30 years. For each period, you will see where the EU effort was concentrated and the positive impact on jobs and growth.



State-of-the-art incubator for biotech companies

The Bio-Incubator in Leuven, provides multi-functional office and lab space for biomedical life sciences companies with high growth potential. The three cutting-edge buildings have customisable modules that are flexible enough to meet companies' needs as they grow. The facilities are backed up by general, technical and logistical support, creating a dynamic and stimulating environment in which biotech companies can develop their ideas and technologies. Bio-Incubator Leuven is situated in a science park close to Leuven's university and colleges which provide fertile ground for innovation and entrepreneurship. The project hosts 15 leading research companies employing around 300 highly skilled researchers.

<https://www.bio-incubator.be/>



Benefits flow from water supply system upgrades

Around 63 000 people will benefit from improvements to the water supply system in the central Bulgarian region of Gabrovo. The work includes reconstruction of the drinking-water treatment plant, building a new pumping station and renovating four others, and upgrading 76 km of the water supply system. Parts of the sewerage system will be rehabilitated and extended and the waste-water treatment plant reconstructed, the aim being to improve the quality of the water, raise hygiene standards and reduce the environmental impact. Reliable and compliant water services will make the area more attractive to investors, with 400 jobs created during the implementation phase.

<http://bit.ly/2pq9xUJ>





National centre of excellence for supercomputing

The IT4Innovations Centre of Excellence is the first supercomputer centre of its kind in the Czech Republic. The new infrastructure is kitted out with the very latest in information technology, including high-performance devices for simulations, modelling and computations. Such tools can be used to simulate climate change, manage traffic and even help prevent natural disasters. Other important areas for research and development at the centre include advancing nanotechnologies, voice and speech recognition technology, and creating new algorithms for industrial product design. The centre, which opened in 2014, ranks among the top 100 most powerful supercomputer centres worldwide.

<http://www.it4i.cz>



Experiencing natural wonders



The GeoCenter Møns Klint is a geological and nature museum on the island of Møn in south-eastern Denmark. The exhibits trace the geological history of Denmark dating back around 70 million years. The contemporary building is situated by the white chalk Cliffs of Møn, one of the country's most stunning natural wonders and tourist attractions. Of the 250 000 annual visitors to the cliffs, 75 000 enjoy the interactive exhibitions in the unique centre, which has become a top site in its own right. The cave-like exhibition booths, laid out like the spine of a dinosaur, are very popular with children.

<http://www.moensklint.dk/>



Hamburg's renewable 'energy mountain' reaches new heights

A former landfill mound has been transformed into a new landmark for Hamburg. Extensive technical works were undertaken to secure and clean the site and protect the groundwater. A high-performance wind turbine and solar energy panels now supply 4 000 households with electricity. The public can walk on a curved boardwalk around the top of the 40-metre hill to enjoy the natural green space and view over the city. They can also visit the information centre to learn about the history of the site, renewable energy and waste management. The project was completed in 2013 using the winning design from an international building exhibition competition.

<http://bit.ly/2IDPwSC>



Figuring out a rapid response

In 2015, Estonia merged its domestic emergency call number for the police with the Single European Emergency Number 112, already used for ambulance and fire services. The project developed technical solutions that enabled the different emergency service providers to process and respond to calls more quickly and efficiently. By 2017, 94% of users were satisfied with the emergency call service, which enables citizens to feel more secure knowing that emergency help is rapidly available from the central system.

<http://bit.ly/2FP9ZWM>





Ireland reaches out to immigrants

The Employment of People from Immigrant Communities programme partners with business and government to help immigrants to find employment and education. It helps disadvantaged and vulnerable migrants to raise their skills and find employment and training opportunities, including work placements and mentoring. Over 2 950 people from 101 countries have benefitted since the programme was launched in 2008. It has been recognised as a good practice initiative and received an award from the National Adult Learning Organisation in Ireland. It is supported by the European Social Fund.

<http://bit.ly/2FX5CET>



Safety first en route from Athens to Thessaloniki

Three new tunnels have transformed what was the most dangerous part of the Thessaloniki-Athens motorway. Construction included 25 km of motorway, 11 km of tunnels and the largest road tunnel in south-east Europe. The Tempi tunnels have halved the travel time on the new sections and reduced the drive from Athens to Thessaloniki to just over four hours. Road safety has dramatically improved with accidents reduced by up to 70%. The Tempi Valley

has also benefited from the project's environmental protection measures.

The project is part of the five motorway concessions which constructed and upgraded approximately 1400 km of roads in Greece, providing thus the country with a modern motorway network that forms part of the country's key transport infrastructure.

<http://www.aegeanmotorway.gr>





Pooling expertise for marine engineering

A new building to house the Environmental Hydraulics Institute in Santander has provided enough space to install a large indoor wave, current and wind simulator. The pool, named the Cantabria Coastal and Ocean Basin), enables large-scale tests to be carried out. The testing facility is unique in the world, providing a boost to coastal and offshore engineering research that is of strategic importance in developing Spain's renewable energy industry. The project has created 135 new jobs, of which 49 are permanent.

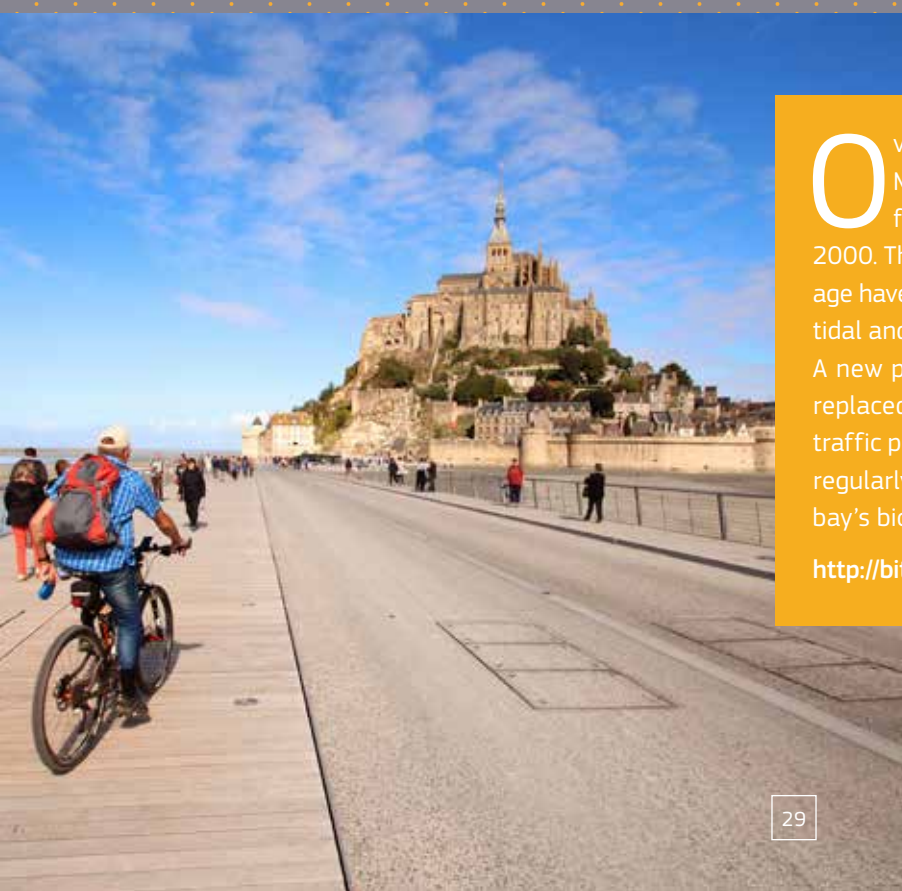
<http://www.ihcantabria.com/es>



Ecotourism upgrade for Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy

Over 3 million tourists visit the rocky islet of Mont Saint-Michel each year to explore its mythical abbey and fortifications. Major improvements were launched in 2000. The Mont's maritime landscape and architectural heritage have been restored thanks to hydraulic works that enable tidal and river currents to swirl around the mount as before. A new pedestrian-friendly bridge and tourist centre have replaced the old causeway and car park, putting an end to traffic pollution. The bay's flora, fauna and water quality are regularly monitored to ensure the beneficial effects on the bay's biodiversity are sustained.

<http://bit.ly/2pr02lp>





Preparing Dubrovnik airport for future tourism surge

Dubrovnik airport in Croatia is benefitting from renovations, including a new passenger terminal. The new larger airport will be better equipped to deal with anticipated rising numbers of passengers travelling to and from the region – a major tourism destination. The overall efficiency of the airport will be improved, with better safety, technical and operational standards including those required for future membership of the Schengen Area. A series of environmental and energy-efficient measures will ensure that the airport – which forms part of the comprehensive Trans-European Transport Network – satisfies standards concerning, among others, noise protection and waste management. The number of people employed at the airport is expected to increase from 447 to 676 by 2020.

<http://airport-dubrovnik.hr/index.php/hr/>



Protecting Pompeii for posterity



The ruins of ancient Pompeii, Unesco World Heritage Site, make for one of the world's most fascinating archaeological experiences. Under Grande Progetto Pompei, €105 million has been invested in its preservation and restoration, of which €78 million is from EU funds. The project aims at the artistic preservation and structural consolidation of the archaeological site. The work is intended to reduce risks from groundwater, stabilise buildings and protect them against the elements, and consolidate and restore walls and decorated surfaces. Completed in 2015, the first phase made it possible to

open 12 500 m² of new exhibition area to the public and provide disabled access to many buildings. The number of visitors has increased by 38%, from 2.47 million in 2013 to 3.41 million in 2017. The rest of the work is expected to be finished by the end of 2018.

www.pompeisites.org



Embracing inclusion in the school environment

In Cyprus, the School and Social Inclusion Actions project is aiming to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on education while preventing the social exclusion of pupils at risk. The project motto – ‘we act, we embrace, we support, we include’ – is closely aligned with a variety of support measures provided in 96 schools at all levels of learning. The actions include programmes to reinforce learning and creativity among pupils and their families; social-emotional support at Information and Psychosocial Support Centres; and the provision of educational tools in schools. The project’s goal – which it has almost achieved already – is to help 15% of the country’s student population by 2020.

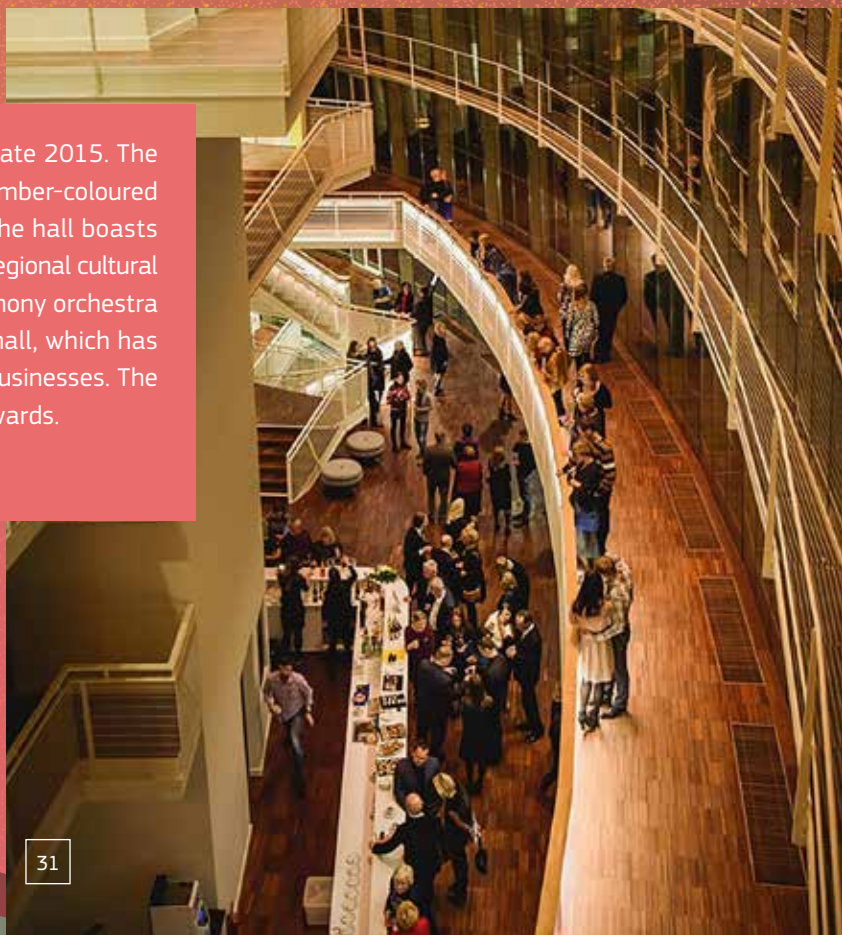
<http://www.studyCyprus.eu/drase>



Contemporary concert hall takes centre stage

The Great Amber concert hall in Liepāja opened in late 2015. The contemporary circular building has a transparent, amber-coloured façade – amber is an important stone in Latvia. The hall boasts outstanding acoustics and is multifunctional. As well as a regional cultural and event centre, Great Amber is home to the local symphony orchestra and music school. In all, 57 people work at the concert hall, which has also brought an influx of new customers to boost local businesses. The building has won numerous international and national awards.

<http://lielaisdzintars.lv>





New diagnostic centre for cancer patients in Vilnius



Cancer is a leading cause of mortality in Lithuania, due to factors including late or incorrect diagnosis and treatment. As part of its 2007-2013 programme to reduce morbidity and mortality from non-infectious diseases, Lithuania invested EU funds in improving the infrastructure and quality of services at oncology institutions. A new centre for positron emission tomography was built at the Vilnius University Hospital Santaros klinikos. By combining this advanced functional imaging technology with computer imaging, early diagnosis of cancer has improved and it is now easier and quicker to determine the effectiveness of treatment, helping to reduce side effects in patients.

<http://bit.ly/2HNSUz1>



Coding school is springboard to employment

Luxembourg is enjoying strong economic growth but faces a shortage of talent in IT jobs. A local company running coding and software development courses identified an opportunity to train jobseekers, in partnership with the national employment agency. By the end of 2017, the project had trained 83 students and 80% of them found a job in IT development within six months. A number of factors contributed to this success, including strong engagement from potential employers. Graduates have spoken positively of how the programme improved their confidence and prospects for work in a fast-changing field.

www.numericall.com





Urban renewal for a Budapest neighbourhood



The Magdolna Quarter was once one of the most neglected parts of Józsefváros district in Budapest, dominated by run-down buildings, a socially disadvantaged population and high levels of unemployment. In 2005, a long-term, integrated strategy began to regenerate the neighbourhood. The programme invested in housing and public spaces as well as comprehensive community, crime-prevention and employment services. It created new local jobs and demonstrated the importance of community involvement in ensuring sustainable urban renewal and inclusion.

<http://bit.ly/2IB1uwf>



Getting hands-on with science and technology

A new state-of-the-art visitor attraction is bringing science and technology closer to the Maltese people. The aim is to inspire more students to pursue scientific careers and help the country compete in the knowledge-based economy. The Esplora building has extensively restored and transformed former ruins on the Bighi peninsula near Valletta. Students, teachers and the general public can enjoy learning about science in the informal, hands-on setting. The centre also runs science workshops, shows and outreach events.

<http://esplora.org.mt/>





3D printers for building design

A research institute and multiple companies are collaborating on smart technology for the building industry. Extra-large 3D printers are being developed to create digital construction products such as flooring, concrete moulding and façade cladding. The aim is ultimately to bring design to the masses by automating the production pipeline from design to installation. The production facilities, situated in a modern canal-side building in Amsterdam, are open to the public. The technology is zero-waste, cuts CO₂ emissions and uses biomaterials such as plastic made from plants.

<http://aactual.com/>



Knowledge flows from river research in Vienna

The University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna is coordinating the Danube River Research and Management (DREAM) project. Key to this is a new research facility with a large channel that allows simulation of the Danube and other large rivers. High-tech instruments are available to study speed and motion. Pipes connect the channel to two other laboratories in the centre, enabling interdisciplinary research on large-scale projects. Hydro-power storage, navigation conditions, river-bed stabilisation and sedimentation movements are some of the topics being investigated. The results will inform future river management, helping to protect the environment and contributing to the future prosperity of the Danube region.

<http://bit.ly/2FVyRbi>





On track to strengthen the pan-European rail network



EU funding is being used to renovate a 15-km section of the E30 rail track between the Polish cities of Kraków and Rzeszów. This completes the upgrading of 139 km of track linking some of the most important cities in the south of the country with other destinations in central and eastern Europe. Trains will travel much faster now, safety has been improved, and passengers will benefit from new station platforms. The improved link will contribute towards stimulating pan-European trade and making the rail network a fast and attractive option for passengers and freight.

<http://www.mapadotacji.gov.pl/projekt/1276181>



Improving quality of life and care for children with chronic diseases

Kastelo is a paediatric and palliative care unit in Matosinhos, Portugal Norte Region. It provides health care to 30 children with chronic diseases. The centre is the first of its kind in the Iberian Peninsula. A team of health and education professionals provide specialist, comprehensive clinical and psychosocial support. Children benefit from continuity of care in a family environment. They can enjoy a play area with outdoor physiotherapy, an orchard, organic vegetable garden and mini-farm, while parents recharge in the on-site residence and garden. Further benefits include the effective use of resources and shorter hospital stays.

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





World-leading laser research centre



Investing in laser facilities is a priority for European research. Construction of a leading international research complex across four sites will enable ground-breaking experiments in fundamental physics, new nuclear physics and astrophysics as well as material science and life sciences. Researchers at the pan-European laboratory will also work on new ways to handle nuclear materials and radioactive waste. It will be open to specialists from the academic and private scientific sphere, as well as the business sector.

<http://www.eli-np.ro/>



Top-of-the-class science campus

A first-class educational and research centre has been built at the University of Ljubljana and includes the Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology, the Faculty of Computer and Information Science, and common spaces linked by a glass bridge. Their location on a campus with other natural science faculties fosters collaboration in research and study. The new centre has led to a significant increase in the number of teaching, research and administrative posts as well as student enrolment. It has generated new business partnerships, patents and spin-offs and had a positive impact on Slovenia's competitive position in science.

<http://bit.ly/2FTMPu5>

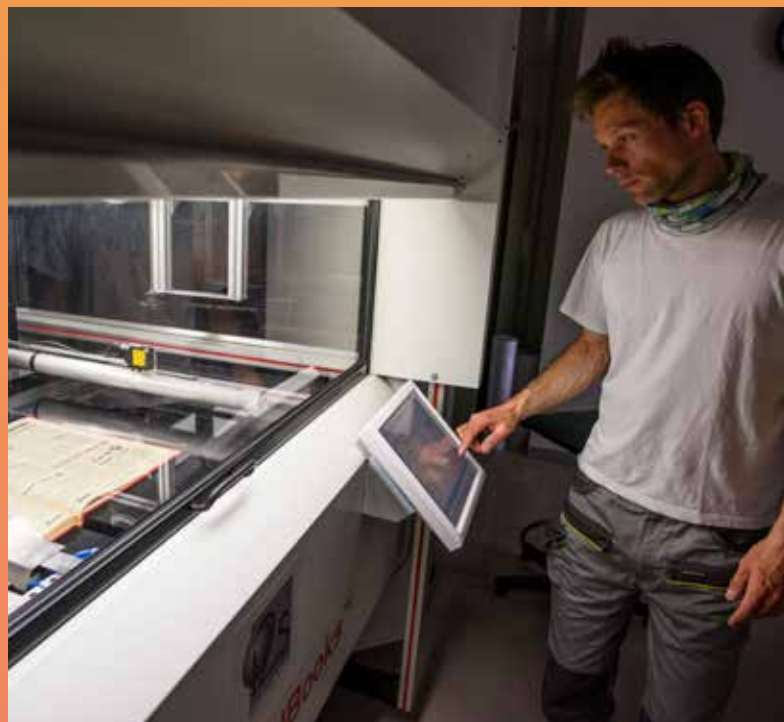




National library and archives go digital

This project has enabled the mass digitalisation of documents from the Slovak National Library and Archives. Two new state-of-the-art facilities were built: a digitisation centre for printed cultural heritage materials, and a document conservation and restoration centre. In total, over 2.5 million cultural heritage objects were digitised over three years, involving 200 staff and creating 93 new sustainable jobs. This unique project has opened up a digital future for the library and archives, making the documents accessible to a wider audience while ensuring their preservation for future generations.

<http://dikda.snk.sk>



Six cities join forces to become smarter and more open

The six largest cities in Finland are implementing cooperative projects that tackle their common urban challenges. The Six City Strategy (6Aika) enables the cities to experiment in a larger context than they would individually. They are creating a shared open data system, open innovation platforms and shared customer services so that municipal authorities and businesses can better support more citizens. The cities are also trialling robot buses and circular economy hubs. As the cities are home to some 30% of Finland's population, their joint development projects have national impact.

<https://6aika.fi/>





A sustainable and innovative future for forest-based industries



The Climate Smart Innovation project is helping to develop forest-based industries in the centre of Sweden. It is providing a long-term regional platform for building SME capacity in innovation and sustainable development. The project will boost knowledge and skills in climate protection, the bioeconomy and circular economy among businesses and other industry stakeholders. Closer interaction with researchers, students and international partners is encouraged, and the public sector and civil society representatives are participating in project workshops. The platform will make regional innovation more efficient and profitable while helping businesses transition to the low-carbon economy.

<http://paperprovince.com/>



London Green Fund targets the environment

The London Green Fund was established as a key financial instrument to achieve the capital's CO₂ and landfill reduction goals. EU and other public funding sources were used to attract private investment as a means of increasing the scale and pace of green infrastructure projects. By the end of 2015, investments had been made in 18 projects which are expected to achieve annual savings of 218 084 tonnes of CO₂, 330 980 tonnes of landfill waste and around 34 700 000 kWh of energy.

<http://bit.ly/2GK21eT>





Cooperating to tackle cross-border crime



Unfortunately, criminality does not stop at borders. The Meuse-Rhine regions between Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands set up a delinquency observatory to combat cross-border crime, with a particular focus on drug-related problems. The EMROD project brought together different professionals in charge of preventing and fighting crime, including police, justice, preventive services and administrative authorities. They took a scientific approach, pooling evidence and exchanging best practices to inform common policies on cross-border problems such as cannabis and burglary. They also ran a large-scale survey on citizens' sense of security and a public information centre.

<http://gouverneur.provincedeliege.be/emrod>



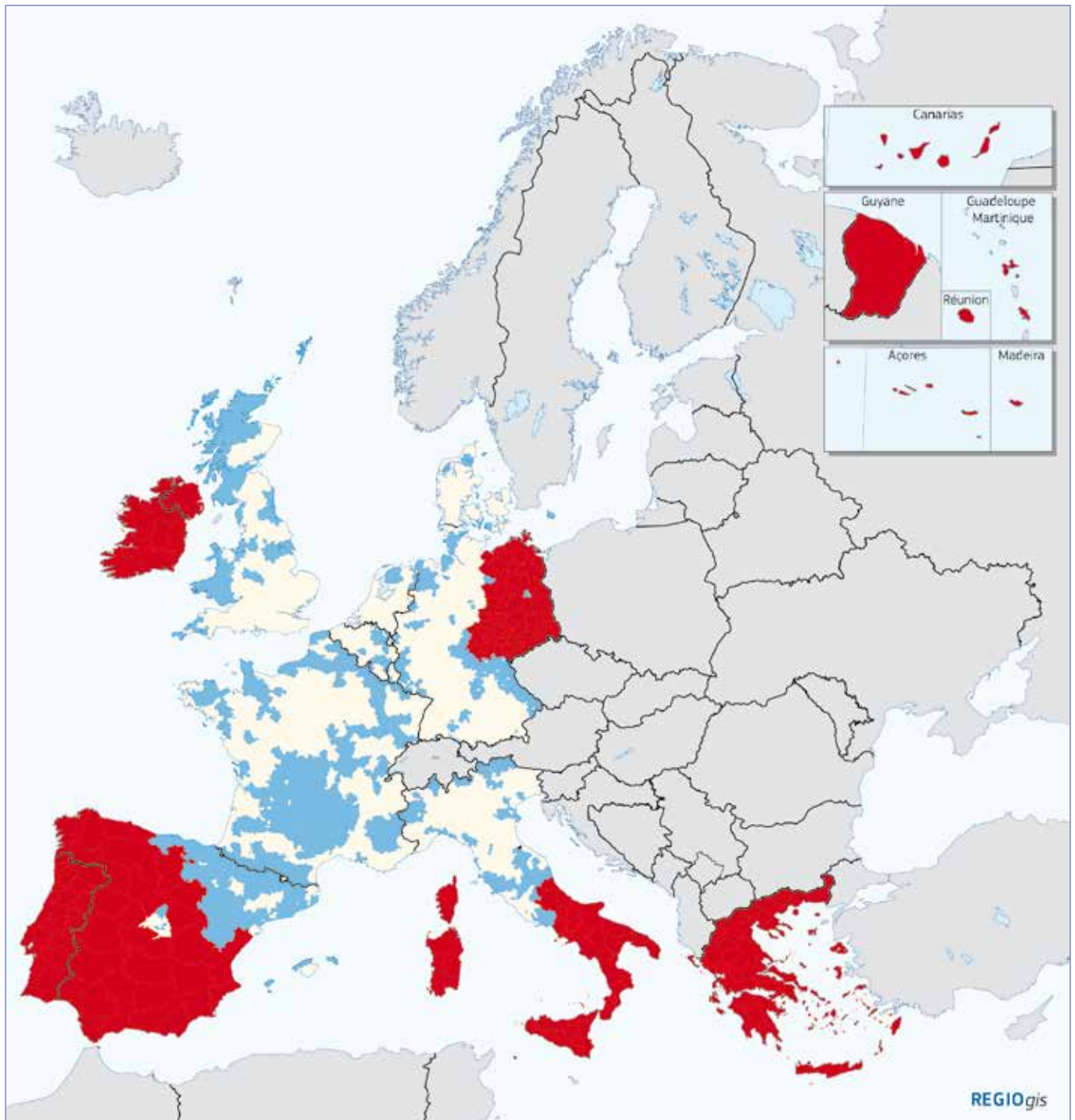
Lessons in peace and conflict

Teaching Divided Histories introduces new, curriculum-linked, digital approaches to the study of conflict into schools in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and internationally. Post-primary teachers collaborate to develop and pilot innovative education programmes using film, digital imagery, animation, comic books and webcasting, to enable young people to explore common experiences of conflict and peace-building. The project is giving teachers the confidence, skills, resources and support to explore contentious history and identity in the classroom. It is also partnering with schools in Lebanon, India, South Africa and Sierra Leone.

<http://bit.ly/2GFCMdn>



1989-1993



- Less-developed regions (Objective 1): 25% of the population and 64% of the funds
- Other eligible regions

From projects to programmes




Following the accession of Greece in 1981, and Portugal and Spain in 1986, regional disparities in the then European Community of 12 Member States widened significantly. 1988 really marked the beginning of the EU Cohesion Policy: in March, the European Council decided to substantially increase the budget allocated to this policy, and in June, the Council adopted the first regulation integrating the Structural Funds under Cohesion Policy umbrella. This landmark reform introduced key principles, such as focusing on the poorest and most backward regions, multi-annual programming, strategic orientation of investments, and the involvement of regional and local partners.

**TOTAL
STRUCTURAL
FUNDS BUDGET**

EUR 69 BILLION

25 % of the EU budget
and 0.3% of the total EU GDP

MAIN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

	Spain	EUR 14.2 billion
	Italy	EUR 11.4 billion
	Portugal	EUR 9.2 billion
	Greece	EUR 8.2 billion

INCREASE IN GDP

+ 3%
for less-developed regions (Objective 1)
compared to EU average

EMPLOYMENT

+ 600 000
jobs in Greece,
Ireland, Portugal
and Spain

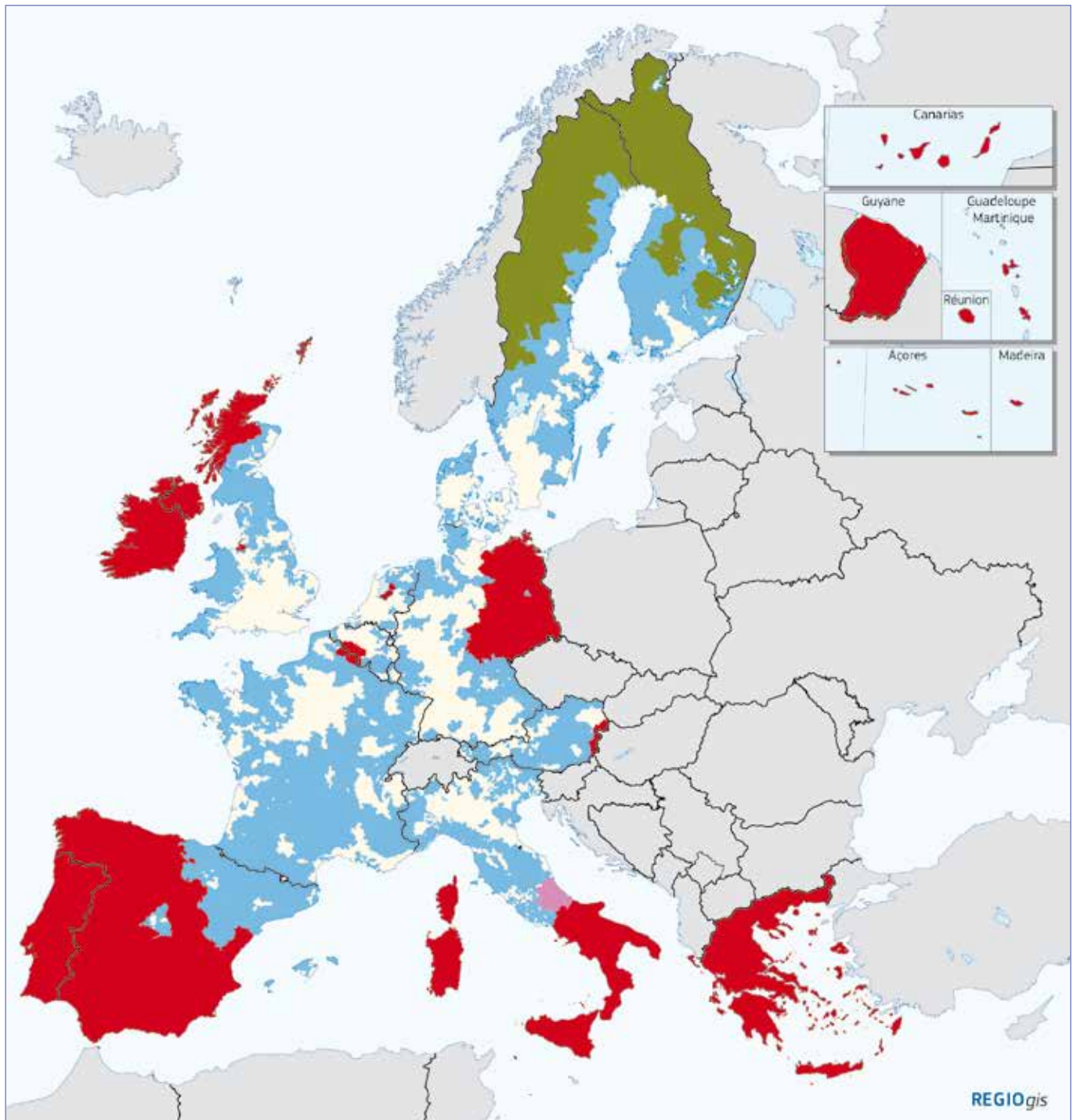
SUPPORT TO SMEs

470 000
SMEs received assistance
in Objective 2 regions

HUMAN RESOURCES

917 000
people trained
in the EU

1994-1999



- Less-developed regions: 24.6% of the EU population and 68% of the funds
- Transitional support: Abruzzi (from 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1996)
- Northern sparsely-populated areas
- Other eligible regions

Consolidating the gains and doubling the effort

In December 1992, the European Council decided on the new financial perspective for the period 1994-1999. This represented a doubling of annual resources and was equal to a third of the EU budget. This programming period was also marked by the enlargement of the EU on 1 January 1995 to include Austria, Finland and Sweden (Finland and Sweden included vast territories with an extremely low population density), as well as greater EU support and its positive impact in the new German Länder.

**TOTAL
STRUCTURAL
AND COHESION
FUNDS BUDGET**

EUR 168 BILLION

1/3 of the EU budget and
0.4 % of the total EU GDP

MAIN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

	Spain	EUR 42.4 billion
	Germany	EUR 21.8 billion
	Italy	EUR 21.7 billion
	Portugal	EUR 18.2 billion
	Greece	EUR 17.7 billion
	France	EUR 14.9 billion

INCREASE IN GDP

Portugal	+ 4.7%
New German Länder	+ 3.9%
Ireland	+ 2.8%
Greece	+ 2.2%
Spain	+ 1.4%
Northern Ireland	+ 1.3%

EMPLOYMENT

+700 000
jobs in the EU

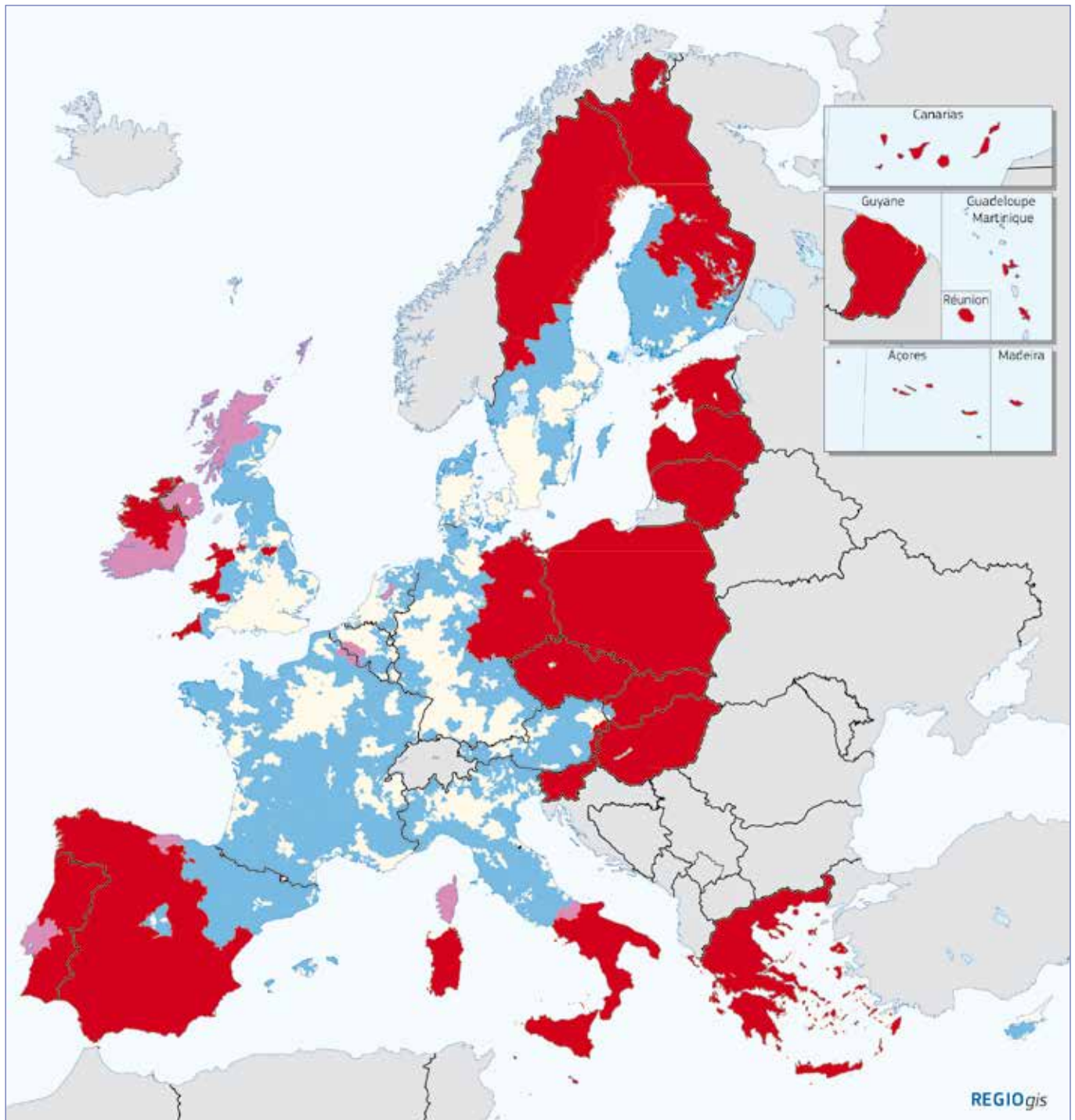
INFRASTRUCTURE

Construction or upgrading of **35 948 km** of roads and motorways

SUPPORT TO SMEs

Aid for
800 000 SMEs

2000-2006



- Less-developed regions (Objective 1): 37% of the population and 71.6% of the funds
- Transitional support (phasing out)
- Other eligible regions

Making enlargement a success

In March 1999, the European Council decided to allocate EUR 213 billion to the EU Cohesion Policy between 2000 and 2006 for the then 15 Member States and an additional allocation of EUR 22 billion for the new Member States for the period 2004-06. On 1 May 2004, the accession of 10 new Member States to the EU was the key element in the period 2000-2006. This historic enlargement brought a 20% increase in the EU's population, but only a 5% increase in its GDP. With enlargement came greater disparities in income and employment. Almost all the new Member States were completely eligible for the highest level of support from EU Cohesion Policy.

**TOTAL
STRUCTURAL
AND COHESION
FUNDS BUDGET**

EUR 213 BILLION

FOR EU-15 BETWEEN 2000 AND 2006

+

EUR 21.7 BILLION

FOR THE 10 NEW MEMBER STATES BETWEEN 2004 AND 2006

INCREASE IN EMPLOYMENT

+ 570 000

jobs in less-developed regions
(Objective 1)

including **160 000** in new
Member States

+ 730 000

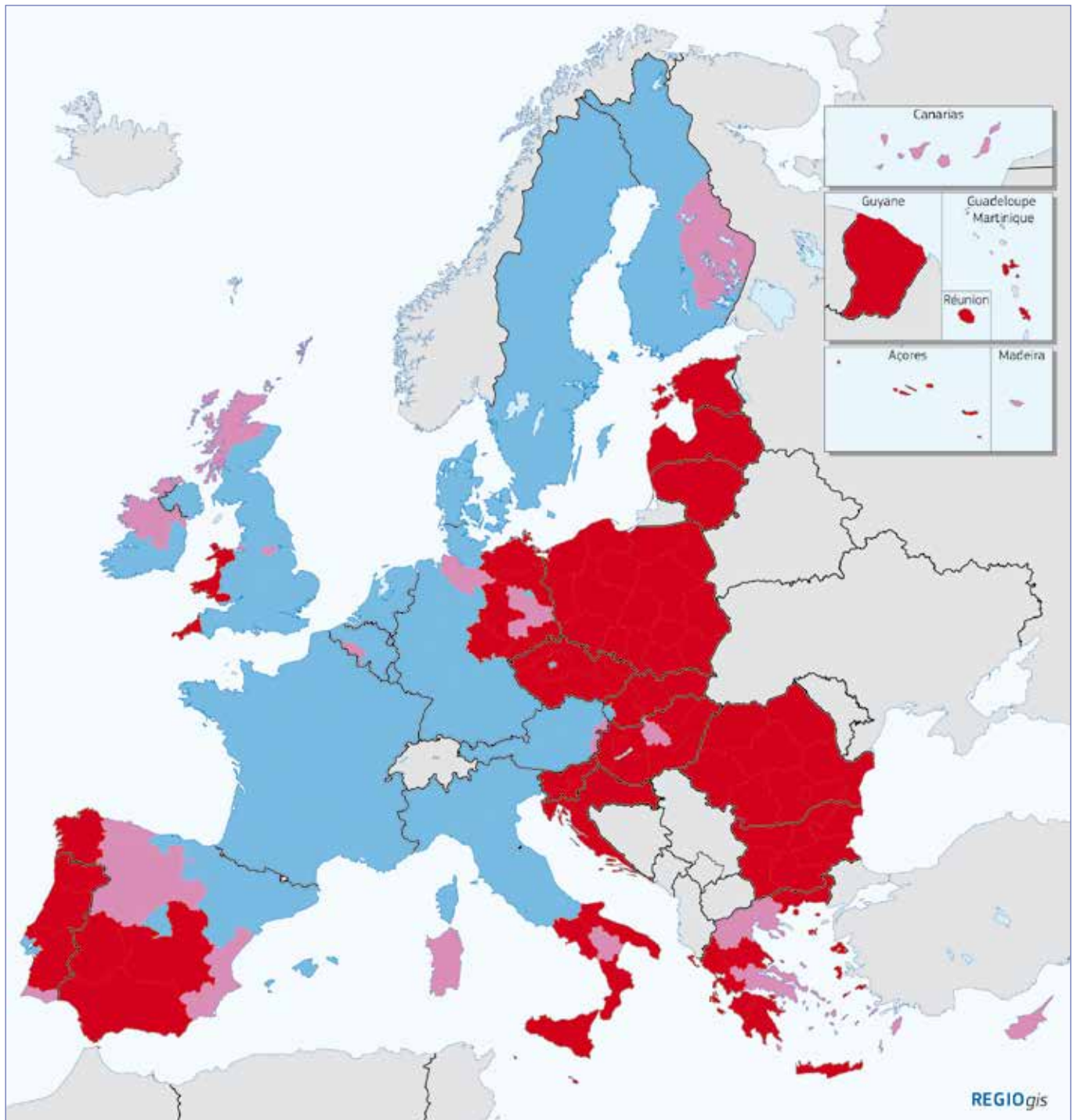
jobs in other eligible regions
(Objective 2)

1/3 of the EU budget
and 0.4% of the total EU GDP

MAIN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

	Spain	EUR 56.3 billion
	Germany	EUR 29.8 billion
	Italy	EUR 29.6 billion
	Greece	EUR 24.9 billion
	Portugal	EUR 22.8 billion
	United Kingdom	EUR 16.6 billion
	France	EUR 15.7 billion

2007-2013



- Less-developed regions: 35% of the population and 81.5% of the funds
- Transitional support (phasing out)
- Other eligible regions

Focus on growth and jobs

In addition to the enlargement to include Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, the 2007-2013 period of Cohesion Policy was marked by three key and complementary elements: the inclusion of all regions, the highest concentration ever on the poorest Member States and regions (81.5% of the total budget), and a shift in priorities set to boost growth and jobs (25% of resources were earmarked for research and innovation). In some Member States, Cohesion Funding is the main source for financing public investment (up to 57% in some countries).

EU funding for financial instruments has increased considerably, rising from €1 billion in 2000-2006 to €11.5 billion allocated in 2007-2013. Financial instruments played a crucial role in providing funding to SMEs during the credit crunch of the economic crisis.

**TOTAL
STRUCTURAL
AND COHESION
FUNDS BUDGET**

EUR 347 BILLION

35.7% of the EU budget
and 0.38% of the total EU GDP

MAIN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

	Poland	EUR 67.3 billion
	Spain	EUR 35.2 billion
	Italy	EUR 28.8 billion
	Czech Republic	EUR 26.7 billion
	Germany	EUR 26.3 billion
	Hungary	EUR 25.3 billion
	Portugal	EUR 21.5 billion
	Greece	EUR 20.4 billion

COMMON CHALLENGES

Cross-border programmes resulted in over **6 800 projects**

EMPLOYMENT

1 million jobs created

INFRASTRUCTURE

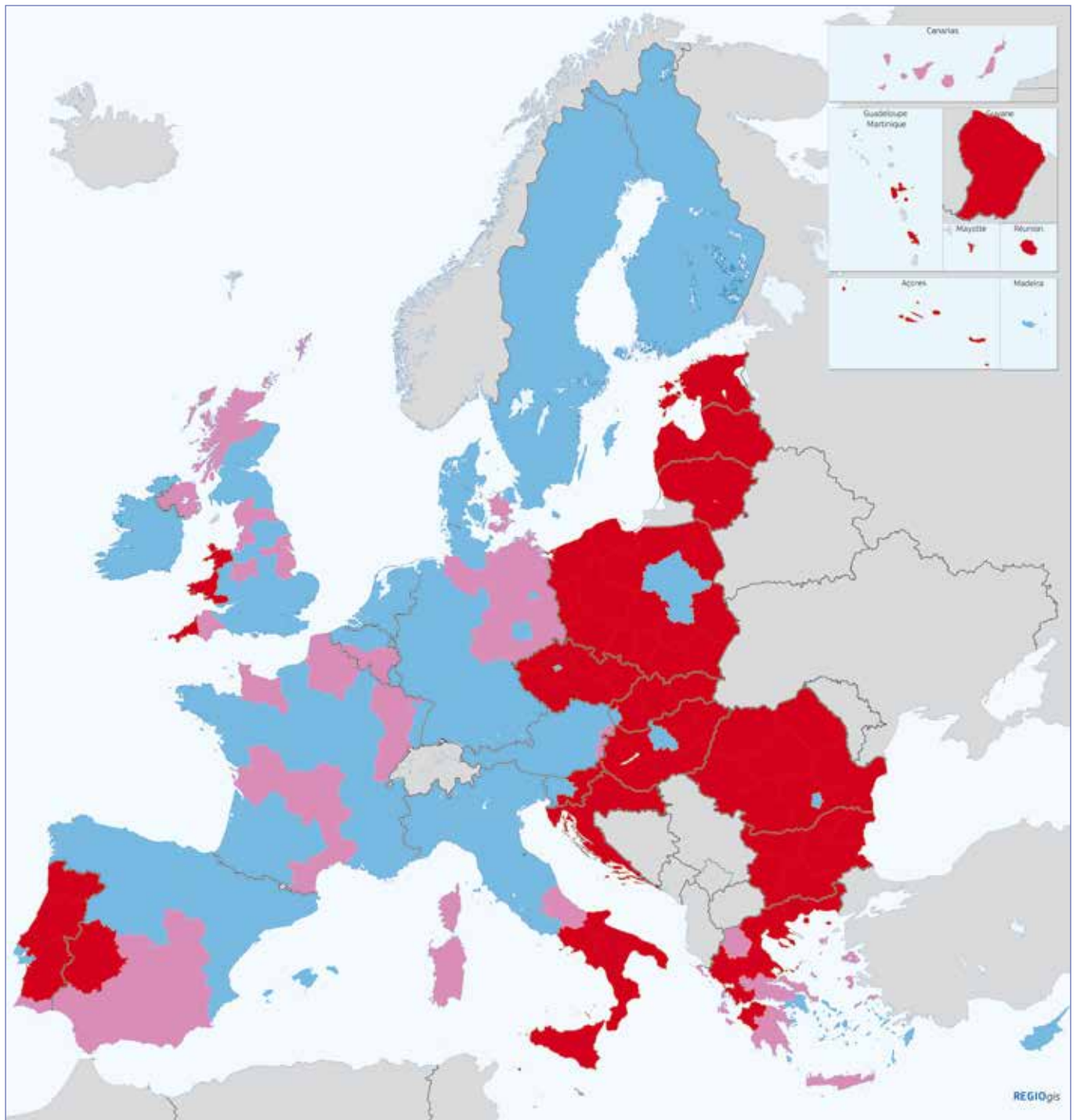
6 million people connected to new or improved supplies of clean drinking water

SUPPORT TO SMEs

400 000 SMEs with direct investment aid

121 400 start-ups financially supported

2014-2020



- Less-developed regions: 25% of population and 51% of the funds
- Transitional support (phasing out)
- Other eligible regions

Innovation and smart specialisation

The focus is on four priority areas with high growth potential: research and innovation, SMEs, information and communication technologies, and the low-carbon economy. The reformed policy is underpinned by the conviction that each region can get the most out of EU funds if it first identifies its core strengths – we call this Smart Specialisation. This will allow the regions to target productive investments in their chosen sectors, thereby maximising their growth potential. Clear and measurable targets are required to define quantifiable results.

**TOTAL
STRUCTURAL
AND COHESION
FUNDS BUDGET**

EUR 351 BILLION

34.3 % of the EU budget

MAIN BENEFICIARY COUNTRIES

	Poland	EUR 77.5 billion
	Italy	EUR 32.8 billion
	Spain	EUR 28.5 billion
	Romania	EUR 22.9 billion
	Czech Republic	EUR 21.9 billion
	Hungary	EUR 21.9 billion
	Portugal	EUR 21.4 billion

DIGITAL*

14.5 million
additional households
with broadband access

EMPLOYMENT*

Helping over **7.4 million**
unemployed people and
8.9 million people gain
new qualifications

INFRASTRUCTURE*

An extra **17 million**
people to be connected to
wastewater treatment facilities
and **3.3 million** more to
smart grids

SUPPORT TO SMEs*

Aid for
1.1 million SMEs

* Expected outcomes

DATA POINT: 5 – OPEN DATA PLATFORM

DO YOU HAVE AN ISSUE YOU WOULD LIKE DISCUSSED IN FUTURE PANORAMA DATA POINT FEATURES?

IS THERE A DATASET YOU WOULD LIKE US TO PUT ON THE ESIF OPEN DATA PLATFORM?

IF SO, PLEASE E-MAIL: REGIO-EVAL@EC.EUROPA.EU

Investing in enterprises – a top priority for restoring growth in the EU

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is providing EUR 69 billion of EU budget support to boost innovation and productivity in Europe's enterprises. This makes the ERDF the largest source of EU funds for enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs. Nearly 1.1 million enterprises – almost 5% of all companies in Europe – are targeted by the range of financial and non-financial supports available. That may seem a small percentage but the concentration of ERDF support on the EU's priorities highlights the importance of promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Why is this support given?

ERDF support to enterprises is concentrated on the four key 'thematic objectives' (TOs) to increase the competitiveness of SMEs, to boost innovation in companies, to improve the use of ICT, and to support the shift towards a low-carbon economy. As a result, public support is given, respecting established state-aid rules, for growing start-ups, launching new innovative products and services, promoting e-commerce, and ensuring energy efficiency.

Table 1 provides the targets for the total number of enterprises expected to be supported by the national, regional and cross-border cooperation programmes across Europe, and helps us to understand the following key questions:

**TABLE 1: KEY ERDF ENTERPRISE TARGETS FOR THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD
(BY THEMATIC OBJECTIVES)**

Thematic Objectives (TOs)	FIRMS: All firms	FIRMS: grant aided	FIRMS: non-grant aided	FIRMS: advised
TO3: Competitiveness of SMEs	795 888	233 823	178 563	371 755
TO1: Research and innovation	130 285	61 401	8 625	42 006
TO2: Information and communication technologies	78 045	54 521	5 776	14 301
TO4: Low-carbon economy	56 789	17 712	5 006	5 743
Other themes	36 060	3 043	4 081	17 638
Total targets	1 097 067	370 500	202 051	451 443

ESIF source: Open Data Platform

What forms of support are offered to what types of enterprises?

The analysis of the targets set by the ERDF programmes for 2014-2020 demonstrates a predominant focus on **TO 3** aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the **SME sector**, with around 800000 enterprises targeted in total. Using the different indicators, we can see that the major forms of support are **financial instruments, grants and business advice (consultancy)**. The latter represents one of the crucial support mechanisms for addressing development needs within enterprises, along with facilitating access to finance through the various grant programmes.

How are SMEs supported across the Member States?

The Open Data Platform shows both the amount of funds allocated to the Member States and the number of enterprises supported in total. The table below shows the top 10 EU Member States receiving the largest support from ERDF under four key TOs:

TABLE 2: TOP 10 EU MEMBER STATES WITH HIGH RATES OF ERDF SUPPORT FOR ENTERPRISES

Number of Enterprises



ESIF source: Open Data Platform

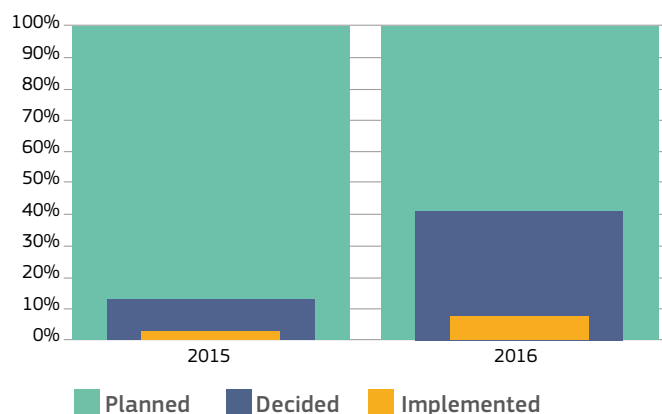
Why are there differences in the number of enterprises supported across the Member States?

The dominance of certain Member States (UK, FR, ES) in terms of the number of enterprises supported can be explained by several factors: 1) strong entrepreneurial culture; 2) focus on small firms and start-ups; 3) the overall volume of support; and 4) the scale of their economies.

How are the programmes delivering and what are the main components influencing their progress in implementation?

By the end 2016, more than 455 000 enterprises had already been targeted by the approved projects, while almost 85 000 of them had already benefited within the selected projects.

TABLE 3: PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING TARGETS FOR 2015-2016



At this stage, the question remains open as to whether the targets will be met or exceeded over the period. Planning public support to enterprises over a 10-year period is a challenge as demand from business for public support varies with the economic cycle. Some programmes are already in high demand and will consider raising their targets. The regular reporting, shared on the Open Data Platform, will focus minds on progress to keep the targets realistic.

To further analyse the allocation of funds by Member State and TO you can explore the European Structural and Investment Funds Open Data Platform. The next round of reporting on achievements evaluated at the end of 2017 will be delivered to the European Commission in May and June 2018 and will be published later in the same year. ■

FIND OUT MORE

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



Capitalising on territorial strengths across the EU

Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) has grown in importance since the Lisbon Treaty. The EU's high-level Europe 2020 strategy introduced a third dimension – territorial cohesion¹ – which aims to capitalise on the strengths of each EU territory to enhance their contribution to the sustainable and balanced development of the EU as a whole.

Living conditions, industrial structures, infrastructure and geographical conditions all vary substantially across the EU. Cohesion Policy sets out to mitigate these differences and ensure that poorer regions have the means to address regional challenges. Nevertheless, in spite of good progress on convergence in many parameters across Europe, there is still significant dispersion within the EU.

Territorial cohesion in the EU will not be achieved by Cohesion Policy funding alone – it also requires territorial-friendly legislation and initiatives. There is a strong demand from policymakers and practitioners from different EU territories to use TIA to minimise negative policy outcomes and maximise territorial potential.

TIA provides the opportunity to pay greater attention to the specificities of different regions and territories, helping EU legislation to be more targeted and linking it more closely to local realities.

The impacts associated with an EU legislative proposal/initiative are often heterogeneously distributed across the Union. This means the design of effective policy options will also bring about an uneven geographical distribution of impacts (costs and benefits).

Finding the target

An accurate assessment of the territorial dimension of an EU legislative proposal/initiative will help shape targeted policy options correctly. It can also stop policies being pursued in areas and regions where no policy response is required, thereby avoiding legal, compliance or administrative costs.

TIA must take into account the different territorial levels (EU, national, regional, local). The relevant territorial unit or grouping may vary from case to case and should be proportional to the issue at hand. It could be specified at the Member-State level or in terms of geographical characteristics, such as coastal areas, insular or mountainous regions or densely populated areas. In other cases, it may be necessary to identify those administrative regions disproportionately affected by a certain policy measure. Obviously, in cases where a policy has no particular territorial dimension, there is no need for a detailed assessment of territorial impacts.

For all of these reasons, since 2015, efforts to improve methodologies and data availability have been gaining momentum. The priority now is to promote to other DGs an analysis of the territorial dimension and proactive work done by DG Regional and Urban Policy to assess territorial impacts (especially on urban^{2 & 3}, cross-border, and outermost regions⁴).

1) <http://europa.eu/cd88BT>

2 & 3) <http://europa.eu/Rx97wR>

4) <http://europa.eu/qR96Nk>



TIA analysis with regional experts using the ESPON Quick Scan tool.

DG REGIO helps other DGs to assess the territorial impacts of their policy proposals. Recent cases where territorial impacts were analysed with the involvement of experts from regions and cities across the EU were: a) Revision of Directive on port-reception facilities for ship-generated waste and cargo residues (DG MOVE); b) Development of minimum quality requirements for reused water in the EU (DG ENV); and c) Revision of Directive on clean and energy efficient road transport vehicles (DG MOVE). In addition, DG REGIO offers training on TIAs and contributes actively to improving the availability of data and methodologies for carrying out TIA. In particular, it has contributed to the development of web tools enabling the visualisation of and access to available territorial data. For example, the Urban Data Platform⁵ gives access to information on European cities and their surrounding regions, while the Territorial Dashboard⁶ provides an interactive interface to query and compare information at different territorial levels (country, region, subregion).

5) <http://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

6) <http://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/t-board/index.html>

In partnership

In the field of TIA, DG Regio has a very close cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions and numerous city and regional associations, such as Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions and many more.

Tools of the trade

The impact on territories can be assessed using qualitative and quantitative methods, such as RHOMOLO⁷, the European Commission's model which can simulate the sector-, region- and time-specific impact of EU policies and support policy-makers when evaluating investments, reforms and structural changes in the economy. The LUISA modelling platform⁸ provides regularly updated 'territorial reference scenario' projections (in line with Eurostat's and ECFIN's long-term projections) simulating the impacts of established European policies at the territorial scale related to sustainability and territorial cohesion. It can also support the quantitative territorial impact assessment of specific 'tailored' policy measures across a broad range of indicators and its results can be aggregated at any territorial level. The ESPON Quick Scan tool⁹ is a quick-to-deploy and cost-efficient methodology to involve stakeholders from cities and regions.

Approved TIA methodologies are now part of the Better Regulation¹⁰ agenda which is the framework for designing and evaluating EU policies and laws transparently, with evidence from, and backed up by the views of citizens and stakeholders.

TIA can help the EU to regain its connection with its citizens. We need to consider the implication of EU legislation across Europe's regions and the different realities in cities, rural areas, the outermost regions, cross-border areas, mountains, islands, etc.

CONTACT US

REGIO-URBAN-TERRITORIAL@ec.europa.eu

7) <http://rhomolo.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

8) <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/luisa/>

9) <https://www.espon.eu/tools-maps/espon-tia-tool>

10) <http://europa.eu/!qc96cF>



EEA and Norway Grants support EU Cohesion Policy in making Europe stronger

The EEA and Norway Grants are the financial contributions from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to European solidarity and cohesion. In the programming period 2014-2021, EUR 2.8 billion has been made available for projects, reinforcing EU investments in central and southern Europe.

Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway cooperate closely with the EU and are members of the single market through the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. This includes a shared goal to reduce social and economic disparities across the EEA.

The countries contribute to this through the EEA and Norway Grants. Like the EU Cohesion Fund, the Grants support EU Member States with a gross national income per capita below 90% of the EU average. Their priorities reflect those of the EU: a green, competitive and inclusive Europe.

In line with the EU's priorities for the current funding period, the EEA/Norway grants have recently set up regional funds to tackle youth unemployment and promote cross-border cooperation.

Maximising the impact

At the beginning of the programming period, each beneficiary country proposes priorities for investment in a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with the donor countries. The European Commission is consulted during negotiations to avoid duplication and to ensure funding is targeted where it will have

the greatest impact. Programmes implemented under the Grants must comply with EU rules as well as standards relating to human rights, good governance, sustainable development and gender equality.

EU and EEA funds are complementary, and usually managed by the same Managing Authority at the national level. One can support the other, for example, by helping a pilot project to grow or funding a different aspect of the same project. The Grants also finance projects where EU or national funding is difficult to find, to avoid duplication. Both EU and EEA funds are successful in leveraging other sources of public and private financing.

A main aim of the Grants is to strengthen bilateral relations between Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and the beneficiary countries. Their priorities respond to shared European challenges, whereby the donor and beneficiary countries have both the expertise and interest in working together. Funds are set aside to facilitate and support bilateral partnerships between public institutions, private companies, NGOs and research institutions at all levels. Thousands of projects are supported in each programming period, including research collaborations, SME joint projects or peer-to-peer exchanges and training for staff.

Supporting democracy

A distinctive feature of the EEA Grants is that a minimum of 10% of the funding goes directly to civil society organisations in each beneficiary country. The aim is to develop the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector in promoting democratic participation, active citizenship and human rights.

The Council of Europe, the OECD and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency are partners on several programmes and projects, contributing their expertise on combating discrimination, social inclusion, economic development and good governance. Empowering vulnerable groups and minorities such as the Roma population is a specific concern for the Grants in many of the beneficiary countries.

FIND OUT MORE

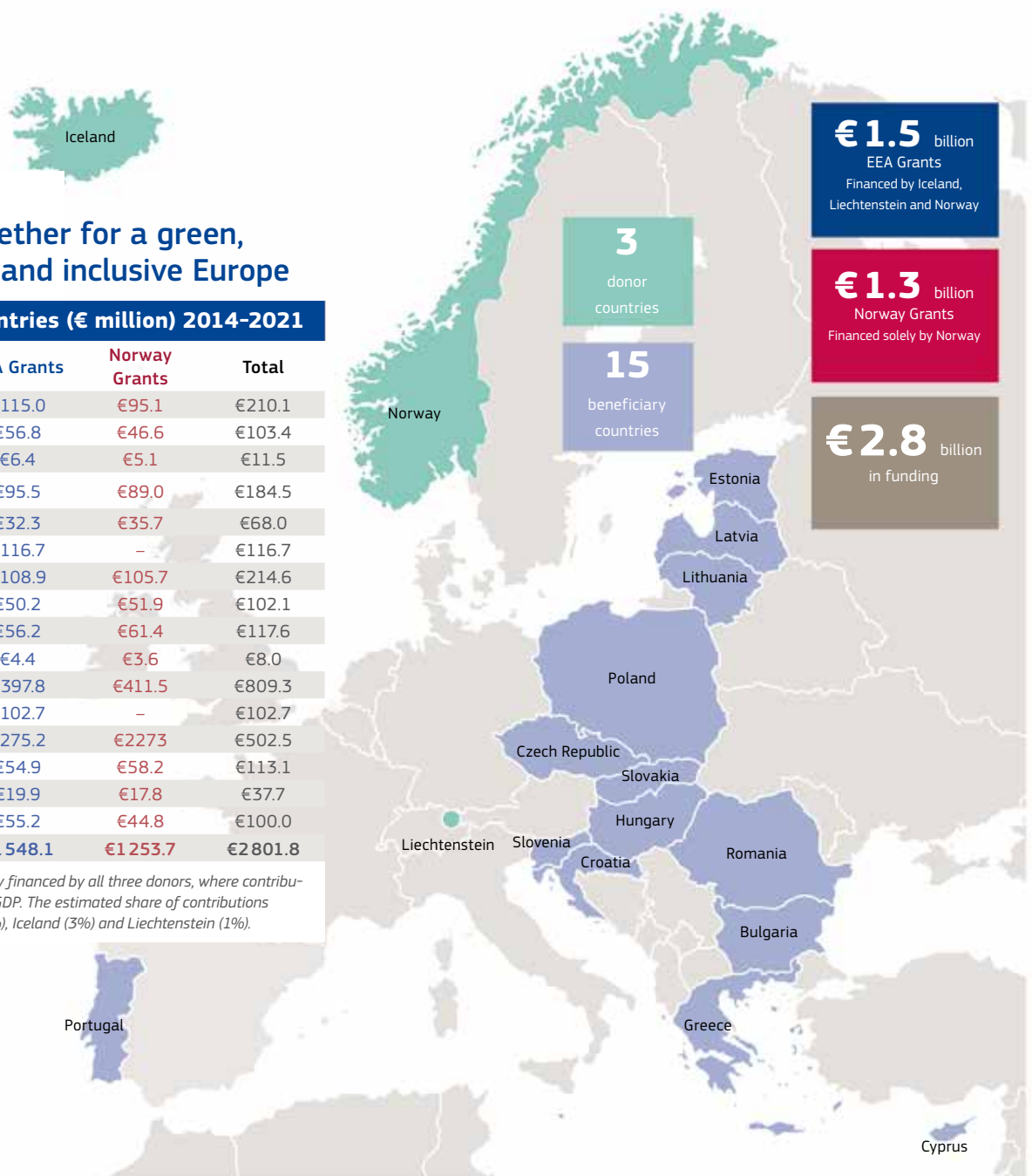
<http://www.eeagrants.com>

Working together for a green, competitive and inclusive Europe

Beneficiary countries (€ million) 2014-2021

Country	EEA Grants	Norway Grants	Total
Bulgaria	€115.0	€95.1	€210.1
Croatia	€56.8	€46.6	€103.4
Cyprus	€6.4	€5.1	€11.5
Czech Republic	€95.5	€89.0	€184.5
Estonia	€32.3	€35.7	€68.0
Greece	€116.7	-	€116.7
Hungary	€108.9	€105.7	€214.6
Latvia	€50.2	€51.9	€102.1
Lithuania	€56.2	€61.4	€117.6
Malta	€4.4	€3.6	€8.0
Poland	€397.8	€411.5	€809.3
Portugal	€102.7	-	€102.7
Romania	€275.2	€227.3	€502.5
Slovakia	€54.9	€58.2	€113.1
Slovenia	€19.9	€17.8	€37.7
Regional funds	€55.2	€44.8	€100.0
Total	€1 548.1	€1 253.7	€2 801.8

* The EEA Grants are jointly financed by all three donors, where contributions are based on their GDP. The estimated share of contributions equates to: Norway (96%), Iceland (3%) and Liechtenstein (1%).



Supporting civil society

Georgi Stoytchev, Executive Director of the Open Society Institute in Sofia (OSI-Sofia), tells Panorama how EEA Grants are supporting civil society in Bulgaria.



What is the OSI's role in managing the EEA Grants for civil society in Bulgaria?

OSI-Sofia is part of a consortium operating the Active Citizens Fund in Bulgaria – the EEA Grants civil society programme for the period 2014-2021. The Fund will be one of the most significant funding sources for Bulgarian civil society organisations (CSOs), providing EUR 15.5 million for projects. Over 85% of the project promoters believe their capacities improved as a result of participating in the previous period. The first open calls for proposals will be announced this year.

How do EEA Grants help address priorities for civil society in Bulgaria?

Bulgaria faces challenges, including a relatively low level of citizen participation, undermined trust in democratic institutions and declining levels of media freedom. We are also tackling problems related to poverty, hate speech, human rights, and the integration of Roma, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups. The Active Citizens Fund is developing the long-term sustainability and capacity of the civil society sector to promote democratic participation, active citizenship and

“The EEA Grants will be one of the most significant funding sources for Bulgarian civil society organisations, providing EUR 15.5 million for projects.”

human rights. At least 10% of total funding has been set aside for projects contributing to Roma inclusion.

How are EU and EEA funding complementary on the ground?

We are currently implementing an EU-funded research and advocacy project to help vulnerable social groups access legal aid in the pre-trial phase. The National Legal Aid bureau is a project partner and is supported by EEA Grants. So both funding streams are supporting Bulgarian CSOs in their judicial reform efforts.

Another example is CSO research that will inform policy recommendations as part of an EU-funded initiative to improve young Romas' access to quality private-sector jobs. This complements the EEA Grants objective of empowering vulnerable groups through measures such as improved access to education, employment and participation in decision-making.

How has the funding helped to strengthen bilateral relations?

The EEA Grants allow civil society organisations from Bulgaria and the donor states to develop and implement joint projects. Over 50 took place over four years, including seminars to share experience and knowledge. More than half of the project promoters supported by EEA Grants in Bulgaria said that they learnt more about Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein as a result. ■



“Looking after these people, giving them protection, it’s an investment for the future. It’s a small thing for me to give but it’s a big thing for those we’re helping.”

*George Maragoudakis,
interpreter for the Greek
Asylum Service*

BOOST FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS IN GREECE

The EEA Grants asylum programme is funding 80 interpreters and a number of additional staff in the Greek Asylum Service. The extra personnel have contributed to a 20-25% rise in the number of cases processed. As programme partner, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration works closely with the Greek authorities to share its experience of handling asylum requests and running reception centres. The EEA funding complements EU financial support in the same area, contributing to the common goal of a well-functioning Common European Asylum System.

<https://eeagrants.org/News/2016/Funding-lifeline-for-Greek-asylum-service#story>

JOINT RESEARCH ON CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE IN POLAND

The Silesian University of Technology in Poland and SINTEF Energy Research in Norway teamed up to develop a new combustion technology that uses pure oxygen and a lower combustion temperature. The technique increases boiler efficiency, reduces nitrogenous pollutants and makes carbon capture easier.

Extensive data sharing and transfer of knowledge led to better understanding, new ideas for solving problems and new avenues for investigation. The partners will continue their successful cooperation in the EU-funded Horizon 2020 CHEERS project which focuses on second-generation carbon capture and storage technology to reduce emissions.

<http://www.mocca.itc.polsl.pl/>

SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIC LITIGATION IN ESTONIA

Strategic litigation involves taking specific cases to court to bring about changes in the law. The Estonian Human Rights Centre held trainings and workshops on using this advocacy tool to improve the protection of rights of vulnerable groups in the area of equal treatment and migration. The Norwegian Organisation Against Public Discrimination shared strategic advice and experiences. The organisations are now exploring future opportunities to collaborate on research-based advocacy in the framework of the EU’s Horizon 2020 research programme.

<https://humanrights.ee/en/topics-main/vordne-kohtlemine/strategic-litigation/>

An integrated intervention in urban waste-water management



Theodoros Karypidis, Governor of Western Macedonia, explains how a successful urban waste-water management project in his region is being used as a pilot for the whole of Greece.

The management of urban waste water is an issue in many parts of Greece, and the Region of Western Macedonia is no exception. The local authorities and the regional development agency, ANKO S.A., jointly endeavoured to identify the magnitude of the problem. With the support of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), they formulated and implemented a strategy, with a budget of EUR 40 million, to deal with it holistically. The project incorporates the EU's principle of sustainability in the overall business plan for Western Macedonia.

Business plan

Our approach to the integrated management of urban waste water is reflected in a recent DG REGIO initiative to draw up and implement a national business plan for this sector. The aim is to study, construct and ensure the operation of waste-water infrastructure (sewerage networks and waste-water treatment facilities or WTFs) for settlements with between 2 000 and 15 000 inhabitants (the so-called 'Category 3 agglomerations') in Greece.

The European Union is funding the development of 13 regional integrated waste-water management plans based on a cooperative governance model. Central, regional and local authorities are driving implementation with the operational support of a national technical secretariat set up exclusively for this purpose.

The Commission's goal is to mobilise funds worth more than EUR 1 billion, so that Greece can fully meet the requirements of the European Urban Waste Water Directive and avoid paying additional fines for non-compliance. The Region of Western Macedonia – and I personally – will work towards this goal by sharing our experience with competent bodies elsewhere.

Going local

The region's local government believes in its role as a 'producer of development', in the knowledge that both design and implementation exceed the time limits of a single period of governance and EU programming periods.

Thus, our long-term vision has been split into phases according to the scale of the problem, the settlements involved and the maturity of implementation. Our continuous and two-way relationship ensured that the interventions and land-use decisions focused on the common good by employing proven project implementation.

The same philosophy was used to design the integrated management of urban waste water in groups of settlements, initially in Kozani and then in the region's remaining three prefectures.

Large urban agglomerations were connected to smaller settlements in a system for transporting and managing urban waste water. At the same time, smaller settlements were grouped as single units to form Category 3-type settlements.

The participatory planning, redesign, adaptation, evaluation and reprogramming of the overall plan and its local implementation were all key to the methodology. This was reinforced by consensus of the region's residents and the active participation of local government, technical and other services working with central and regional departments. The involvement of ANKO S.A., from the initial design stage up to the trial operation of the WTFs, was also crucial.

We are currently carrying out the overlapping construction phases and the temporary operation of the projects completed under the 2007-2013 NSRF, while implementation of the remaining projects in the 2014-2020 Programming Period programmes is ongoing.

Once these have been completed, the Region of Western Macedonia will be fully compliant with the provisions of the legal framework and will be a shining example at national level. Approximately 90% of the Kozani Prefecture population will be served by our pioneering plan.

Furthermore, the planning is almost complete for internal and external waste-water transfer networks in grouped settlements which will be served by Category 3 WTFs or local solutions.

We are also developing an integrated plan to manage biologically treated sludge, and are working towards the effective and unified management and operation of WTFs across the Region of Western Macedonia.

It is clear that we have a strategy, are using participatory procedures, are focusing on the environment, sustainability and quality of life, are providing technical support for our plan, and are continuing to set innovative new targets to improve the role of local government. ■

Theodoros Karypidis, Governor of Western Macedonia

VELVENTOS WASTE-WATER TREATMENT FACILITY

The waste-water treatment facility started operations in 2016 and has a capacity to serve 5 400 inhabitants. Sewage treatment is carried out by using the extended aeration activated sludge process with simultaneous sludge stabilisation and parallel nitrification, denitrification and dewatering of sewage. The project was funded by the 'Environment and Sustainable Development' operational programme.



SERVIA WASTE-WATER TREATMENT FACILITY



This project, which has the capacity to serve 7 500 inhabitants, is currently undergoing a testing period. Sewage treatment is carried out by using the extended aeration activated sludge process with simultaneous sludge stabilisation and parallel nitrification, denitrification and dewatering of sewage. The project is funded by the 'Environment and Sustainable Development' operational programme.



PROJECTS

MAJOR RESTORATION FOR AUSTRIAN LANDMARK

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 1 665 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 326 700**

Heinfels Castle, which sits in the mountains of Austria's East Tyrol, is undergoing major restoration thanks to a project backed by the European Regional Development Fund. Upon completion, the castle will be open to the public, as will two other landmarks in neighbouring Italy, which have also received funding through the same scheme.

The historic monument sits on a hill overlooking the village that bears the same name. The fortifications were first mentioned as far back as 1243, and while the exterior of Heinfels Castle remains impressive, the interior has fallen into disrepair.

The restoration scheme aims to change this situation with building works scheduled to run until 2019. Redevelopment plans include the reconstruction of fallen walls and ceilings, and the restoration of façades. Existing windows and doors will also be restored – or replaced where necessary.

In addition, the chapel will be transformed into a dedicated museum. Maintenance of internal structures and indoor plasterwork are also undergoing restoration. Public accessibility has been guaranteed through the ERDF project, although a second phase of development promises to deliver a more focused concept for the building's long-term use.

Surrounding landmarks

Along with Heinfels Castle, two other stand-out buildings are being restored thanks to the wider 'Towers and Castles' project. The Magnifica Comunità in Cadore and Feltre Castle in Feltrino are both situated in the neighbouring northern Italian province of Belluno. Like Heinfels, these buildings play an important part in local cultural identity and are popular tourist attractions.

The renovation works are tailored to the needs of each building which are in varying states of disrepair. However, in general terms, the goal is to make each one more accessible to the general public and to enable them to host exhibits which showcase local history.

Works carried out within this cross-border project will also enable a comparison to be made of the different approaches to renovation and the various techniques used by skilled craft-people. Students from local vocational schools will visit the sites and take part in workshops, study seminars and practical renovation exercises.

Promotion of the buildings and their renewed access for locals and tourists alike will be at the heart of a joint communications campaign which will highlight the monuments' cultural importance and less well-known architectural features. Tourism will be further promoted through the creation of a cross-border cultural network. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://burg-heinfels.com/index.php/de/>

PROJECTS

AIRPORT REVAMP BOOSTS SAFETY – AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 70 000 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 35 000 000**

Estonia's Tallinn Airport is undergoing a EUR 70 million makeover which will improve flight safety while alleviating the negative effects of airport operations and infrastructure on the surrounding environment.

The scheme, which has received a EUR 35 million contribution from the Cohesion Fund, will deliver a range of systems and facilities to be installed at the eastern and southern flanks of the airport's airside area.

Establishing rainwater and drainage systems along with snow collection and de-icing areas will help to reduce the environmental impact caused by the pollution of surface and groundwater. The airport is also benefiting from an updated lighting infrastructure, which will allow it to implement a CAT 2 navigation system. This system gives pilots greater scope to use their instruments to land safely even during periods of poor visibility.

Greater efficiency

The airport runway safety zone is to be reinforced during the project. These alterations, together with the new airfield lighting system, will enable Tallinn Airport to comply with European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) requirements for infrastructure.

In addition, purchasing new technologies and safety equipment for the runway will allow for more efficient maintenance of the reconstructed and supplementary infrastructure.

Changes made during the project will make it possible to direct the take-off and landing of aircraft further away from the border of nearby Lake Ülemiste – and increase the landing-approach height of aircraft above Tallinn and the lake. This will help to reduce noise pollution in surrounding areas.

The project is scheduled for completion in 2020. This work builds on previous Cohesion Fund-backed projects to upgrade and expand Estonia's largest airport. A scheme completed in 2008 saw the reconstruction of the airport's taxiway and apron areas, as well as the doubling in size and comprehensive modernisation of the t-shaped terminal building. Enhanced security facilities, passenger bridges, new check-in desks and wireless internet were also introduced as part of the investment.

Measures supported through the Cohesion Fund have helped boost Tallinn Airport's capacity, enabling it to cater for around 2.5 million passengers every year. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.struktuurifondid.ee/eng/edulood#!projekt-37003>



PROJECTS

TOP AWARD FOR GREEK RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 199 715 800**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 161 061 000**

A project which has delivered high-quality internet connectivity to the “white rural areas” of Greece has been chosen as one of five winners of the European Broadband Awards 2017.

‘Broadband Network Development in White Rural Areas of Greece’ is a national initiative supported by EU funding which provides the country with infrastructure coverage and affordable connectivity services. Around 5 077 settlements and over 500 000 citizens are benefitting across remote and disadvantageous areas in northern, central and southern regions of Greece.

The project closes the broadband gap between mostly mountainous, insular as well as border areas and the rest of the country. Previously, these dispersed residential departments had no connection with the digital world because commercial players were reluctant to make the necessary investment in broadband because of poor returns.

Support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) have helped the Greek government deliver the high-capacity network through a public-private partnership. Users can expect to enjoy internet access at a bandwidth of up to 30 Mbps, rising to 50 Mbps through gradual service enhancement.

Economic and social benefits

It is hoped that the new broadband network will bolster social cohesion and provide an economic boost to poorer areas. Accessible and efficient IT infrastructure can improve the viability of business activity and encourage people – particularly the

younger generation – to stay rather than move away to more built-up areas. Estimates show that an increased broadband penetration of 8% could help the economy of these sparsely populated regions grow by 1.2%

Access to such an extensive broadband high-capacity network should also encourage the growth of small businesses and provide citizens with a wide spectrum of teleworking opportunities. In addition, the agricultural sector will derive great benefits from this investment. It will help farmers increase their production, and give companies instant access to crop market prices as the introduction of new IT will make their operations more effective. Businesses in the culture and tourism sector are also set to benefit from better broadband access.

Education is already seeing tangible results from this sound investment. Now they have a reliable broadband service, schools in remote, mountainous areas of the Pella prefecture in northern Greece can make use of educational digital media in the schools’ workshops. Continuation of the project will be co-financed with 2014-2020 funds in order to cover the remaining white areas across Greece.

The project won the European Broadband Awards 3rd category: ‘Territorial cohesion in remote and rural areas’. The awards are organised by the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology. ■

FIND OUT MORE
<http://bit.ly/2ohCPn1>

AGENDA

24 MAY

Brussels (BE)

High-level conference on 'Good Governance and the EU Cohesion Policy'

24-25 MAY

Catania (IT)

3rd Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR)

3-5 JUNE

Tallinn (EE)

9th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

8-11 OCTOBER

Brussels (BE)

European Week of Regions and Cities

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/



The Road Trip Project is a European travel experience that will take 8 individuals on 4 routes (Mediterranean, Atlantic, Danube, Baltic) across the continent between 14 April and 25 August 2018.

Four duos will embark on a European road trip in a van. Along the way, they will meet locals and experience the local vibe, discover projects that change people's lives for the better, and explore unknown places and amazing landscapes.

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