



European
Commission

PANORAMA

AUTUMN 2018 / No. 66

Lithuania: building a smarter future

GOING GLOBAL
WITH
INTERNATIONAL
URBAN
COOPERATION



ROAD TRIP
PROJECT –
WHAT
A JOURNEY!



Regional and
Urban Policy

PANORAMA

In this issue ...

The autumn issue of *Panorama* magazine covers a wide range of topics from urban issues to international cooperation and energy policy.

Our country focus this time is on Lithuania. In our interview, Vilius Šapoka, Minister of Finance, explains how Lithuania has used EU funding to enhance his country's competitiveness and productivity through investment in business development. This is illustrated with detailed profiles of five new projects. Captured on Camera explores projects funded in the German region of Rhineland-Palatinate.

We look at how Cohesion Policy is supporting sustainable energy and a low-carbon society, our strategic partnerships with cities around the world through the International Urban Cooperation programme, and highlight the results of a recent

report into doing business in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Slovakia.

We reveal the winners of this year's #EUinmyregion photo and blogging competitions, and look back at the recently completed Road Trip project, catching up with all eight young participants in Berlin at the end of their adventures. The projects section visits Gibraltar, Romania and Germany.



AGNÈS MONFRET

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

Cover picture: Thinkstock/ Aleh Varanishcha



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EDITORIAL

“The trees we plant today must provide shade for our great grandchildren whether they hail from East or West, from South or North. To give them all they need to grow and breathe easily.”

With these words in his State of the Union Speech this year, President Juncker reaffirmed once again the full validity of a long-standing, key Union commitment: delivering on the promises of fostering peace and long-term prosperity for all, no matter where they live or come from in the EU.

As European Commissioner for Regional Policy, I am proud to be at the forefront of the EU policy that is making this possible every day, together with millions of Cohesion Policy practitioners throughout the Union. This issue of *Panorama* gives a number of valuable examples of how their valuable work is making a difference.

Once again, in a few days, many of these practitioners from all over the EU will be gathering in Brussels to attend our European Week of Regions and Cities, bringing their experience and knowledge as well as their commitment to a better and more prosperous Europe.

However, this year's EU Week will certainly be a special one. As President Juncker put it, there is currently a “strong demand for Europe” which the EU must live up to. It must deliver. The European Commission's proposals for 2021-2027, which set out our common ambitions for the new period, are the first step. But now it is time to move on and feed these proposals with ideas and projects that will shape this policy for the next decade. And this is where input from participants at the EU Week of Regions and Cities can be so valuable.



Participants will be invited to share their views, experience and thoughts on three main themes:

- The need for a strong Cohesion Policy beyond 2020, which overcomes structural barriers, boosts human capital, and improves the quality of life of EU citizens;
- Growth and regional development; understanding and managing the regional dimension of globalisation, digital transformation, climate change and energy transition; and
- Integrated territorial development, including strategies on youth, integration of migrants and social exclusion.

I am really looking forward to the upcoming discussions and to the huge raft of new ideas that will emerge during the event. They will certainly plant the seeds for the new round of Cohesion Policy programmes and thus for the trees that will provide caring shade for the next generations of Europeans. This is our responsibility and I am sure that, over time, they will be proud of our choices and our determination to stay our course whatever the challenges, wherever the places and whenever the times. ■

CORINA CREȚU

European Commissioner for Regional Policy



A clean and fair energy transition for all

Europe's transition to a low-carbon society is becoming the new reality on the ground. Proposals for 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy not only accelerate the move towards climate and energy targets, but they also support economic growth, job and business creation, investment opportunities and fairer access to sustainable energy.

All of society needs to be mobilised to develop solutions for a clean, fair Energy Union. Every stakeholder has a part to play in meeting Europe's mutually agreed 2020 and 2030 energy and climate targets and the Paris Agreement commitments to limit climate change.

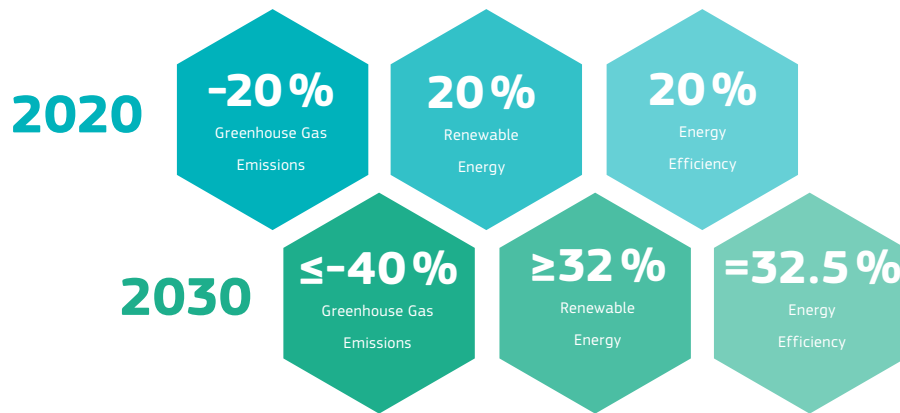
The energy transition also contributes to the modernisation of Europe's economy. It can fuel economic growth, investment and technological leadership, promote regional development, bring about a cleaner, healthier environment and improve access to cleaner, more secure energy.

ENERGY UNION STRATEGY

A European Energy Union will ensure that Europe has secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy. The EU's Energy Union Strategy, put forward in 2015, is made up of five closely related and mutually reinforcing dimensions:

- › Security, solidarity and trust
- › A fully-integrated internal energy market
- › Energy efficiency
- › Climate action – decarbonising the economy
- › Research, innovation and competitiveness

CLIMATE AND ENERGY TARGETS



For the energy sector alone, significant investment of around EUR 400 billion is needed over 2021-2030, mainly in energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and infrastructure, while the shift away from traditional sectors such as coal will also have social costs. EU Cohesion Policy can help regions and cities to develop effective solutions for a fair and efficient clean energy transition that reflects the diversity of conditions across Europe.

Cohesion Policy in the current 2014-2020 period already support partnerships, bottom-up solutions and smart specialisations in low-carbon technologies and services. These have promoted more sustainable energy use in all sectors, including transport, along with increased access to smart grids. By the end of 2017, about EUR 34.5 billion of Cohesion Policy funding – half the planned 2014-2020 funding of EUR 69 billion – had been committed to projects supporting the Energy Union.

ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOMES IN LITHUANIA

In Lithuania, around EUR 314 million of European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020 resources are being invested in renovating old multi-apartment buildings and blocks to increase their energy efficiency. The modernisation is expected to reduce energy consumption by up to 60% for 30 000 families. By the end of 2017, 750 buildings had been renovated, impacting 19 000 families, around 400 buildings were being renovated and 700 renovations were in the pipeline.

Enabling an accelerated transition

The proposals for 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy offer a shorter, modern menu of priorities focused on a smart, green, low-carbon, more social and more connected Europe that is closer to citizens. They bring flexibility and ease to developing integrated approaches across policy areas and regions that can speed up the energy transition.

By concentrating investment on fewer themes, Cohesion Policy remains focused on what is crucial for competitiveness and for structural adjustments to globalisation challenges and technological change. At the same time, it avoids fragmentation of resources to focus on smart and innovative economic transformation of regions and a greener, low-carbon Europe.

At the national level, the Energy Union Governance obliges Member States to produce an Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan for 2021 to 2030. This plan is now part of the modernised enabling conditions proposed by the Commission for Cohesion Policy, as are several other measures linked to energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Indeed, governance and reform aspects are crucial for success. Relevant recommendations under the Energy Union Governance and the European Semester need to be taken into account throughout the programming and implementation stages.

The proposed European Urban Initiative also strengthens current action, building on the Urban Agenda for the EU. It promotes innovative investments while merging different



funding tools for a new coherent approach that cities can use to more easily develop smart, low-carbon systems. Meanwhile, in Interreg, cross-border programmes will be able to focus more than before on institutional cooperation, resolving border issues, and investing in joint services, all important for a more sustainable energy system.

Complementing private investment

The ultimate policy objective is to create viable energy markets. Private funding sources should cover the bulk of investment in this area since projects for renewable energy or infrastructure lead to revenue generation, while energy-efficiency investments lead to reduced energy bills.

Public sources should step in where market failures lead to funding gaps. Member States and regions need to ensure that public funding does not replace but complements and leverages private investment, whenever relevant, in accordance with state aid rules.

As Cohesion Policy resources are planned to be scarcer in the 2021-2027 programming period, the overall importance of financial instruments should increase. This is in line with the general aim to trigger investments on the ground while maximising private investment. At the same time, it maintains flexibility to achieve the overall policy objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Where parts of the activities are not revenue-generating or cost-saving, they could be supported by a combination of grants with financial instruments, for instance to help upscale innovative technologies or to address social issues such as energy poverty.

Driving new systems

Substantial changes in our economies and societies are needed to reach the EU's long-term objectives. The clean and fair energy transition requires systemic solutions rather than optimisation of existing systems.

It is important to develop relevant knowledge and know-how among actors at all levels. Good coordination is required between all types of stakeholders, both public and private, including to design different support instruments.

Accompanying measures should include support for building regional and local capacity to managing the clean energy transition. All relevant actors, such as NGOs, businesses, researchers or authorities must be included.

In particular, exchange of experiences between countries can improve the capacity of public and private stakeholders. At EU level, the Energy and Managing Authorities (EMA) Network has a useful role. ■

FIND OUT MORE:

<https://europa.eu/ljN48TP>



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 regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu for further information on guidelines and deadlines.

Cohesion Policy drives development in Lower Austria

Lower Austria is the country's largest region by area and second-largest by population, with 1.67 million inhabitants. Challenges related to economic dynamism, infrastructure, a growing population and Vienna's proximity are important, as are those from being neighbours to the Czech Republic and Slovakia.



Johanna Mikl-Leitner,
Member of the European
Committee of the Regions
Governor of Lower Austria



Martin Eichtinger,
Alternate Member of the European
Committee of the Regions and
Member of the Government of
Lower Austria for Housing, Labour
and International Relations

Cohesion Funds allow Lower Austria to deal with many of these challenges and implement numerous projects in spatial development, environmental protection and conservation, research, development and new technologies. The region's economy also benefits from Cohesion Policy support for business modernisation and new business sites. The resulting economic development has improved employment in Lower Austria. Unemployment figures are at their lowest for 18 years.

Regional investment in cross-border projects allows us to convey to citizens the idea of a common Europe. One, the 'Lower Austrian Language Offensive', prepares young people linguistically and interculturally for the common economic and employment market with the Czech Republic, Slovakia and nearby Hungary. Another, the 'Health Across' initiative, is improving healthcare provision for people in border regions.

"Our diverse regional projects stimulate cross-border cooperation that is shaping our European identity," says Martin Eichtinger, Member of the Government of Lower Austria for Housing, Labour and International Relations and alternate member of the European Committee of the Regions.

Lower Austria has been and will in future be a driving force for European regions. The heartbeat of Europe comes out from the regions and they are the best placed to convey to citizens the idea of a common Europe.



In 2010/2011, along with other regions and organisations, Lower Austria initiated the work for the EU Cohesion Policy to continue for all EU regions in the 2014-2020 funding period. In 2016, 342 regional and provincial partners, representing 83% of the EU-27 population, joined our call to continue the 'EU Regional Policy' after 2020.

In January 2018, I presented the network's demands to Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Together

with the #CohesionAlliance of the Committee of the Regions, we were also active in negotiations towards the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

Many of our demands were included in the new European Commission proposals for Cohesion Policy 2021-2027. These include the availability of Cohesion Funds for all regions, a continued focus on cross-border cooperation, concentration of EU funds in areas with EU added value, and simpler administration.

A further step will be taken at the 10th European Innovation Summit in the European Parliament on 28 November. Europe's regions will show that innovation, as a priority for growth, employment and progress, cannot be seen in isolation from Cohesion Policy. Both enhance regions and cities, to guarantee a common strong and safe Europe for all citizens. ■

Investing in cities to boost local development

In view of the fact that Cohesion Policy is the biggest source of financial support for investments in economic growth and jobs, municipalities in Romania are in favour of a simplified Cohesion Policy which takes a consistent approach towards cities.



**Robert Sorin Negoită,
President of the Romanian
Municipalities Association,
Mayor of Sector 3 of the
Municipality of Bucharest**

The budgetary allocation for sustainable urban development must be proportionate to the vital importance of cities in countries' growth and development. Local authorities are capable of using the available resources efficiently to achieve the desired results, adapting to, anticipating and responding promptly to the increasingly diversified needs of citizens, and being accessible to beneficiaries and

accountable to them. Local authorities are the ones that take the initiative in transforming their own cities into centres which are competitive and attractive to inhabitants.

The single regulatory framework and the introduction of new criteria for the allocation of European funds will contribute to better adaptation to the current realities, needs and priorities of regions and cities. Consolidation of the principle of partnership and the role of local and regional authorities in implementing Cohesion Policy through their active involvement and the promotion of tools to stimulate and support local development through integrated strategies can contribute even more to mitigating the risk of greater regional disparities.

For the future post-2020, we believe in simplifying Cohesion Policy, focusing resources on successful programmes with a positive record and a positive impact on citizens, and in consolidating information and dissemination activities. ■

EU funding policy 2021-2027 – a German perspective

German local authorities welcome reforms to the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) that aim to simplify it and make it more transparent, address new challenges, and plug the funding gap created by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU.



Maximilian Klein,
Head of Office, Europabüro
der Bayerischen Kommunen

The MFF and the regulations on individual funding programmes are of particular importance to local authorities. They determine the direction and quality of EU funding for seven years. The Commission showed courage in proposing a budget that is actually growing in absolute terms, despite calls for savings across the board.

EU funding policy has an impact on almost every facet of local policies, be they the promotion of innovative local mobility solutions, support for basic services in sparsely populated border communities, or the financing of integration measures for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. EU funds can always make a difference in whether or not a project is implemented.

Participating in decisions on the future of funding policies is therefore of the utmost importance to local authorities. Bavarian local authority umbrella organisations thought early on about what format future funding should take. They actively integrated this into their work process and shared their views with the Commission.

With proposals currently under discussion, the Commission has tried to address many of the key requests. Efforts have been made to reduce bureaucracy, to allow more flexibility in setting and implementing objectives, and to better align thematic objectives with actual needs on the ground. Local authorities are also advocating these points in continued proceedings.

However, the most important request was that support should continue to be made available in all regions of Europe, particularly through European Structural and Investment Funds.

This point has been fully taken up by the Commission. Local authorities have also received the support of the European Parliament by a large majority. EU funding has not only added value in cohesion countries, but it ensures greater cohesion in all Member States and a population that identifies more readily with the EU and the European idea.

It is now important that the Member States, on the one hand, and the European Parliament, on the other, reach an agreement as soon as possible. What must be avoided at all costs is a protracted phase without any possibility of applying for EU funding. ■



Doing better business locally sharpens global competition

The second 'Doing Business in the European Union 2018' report analyses the regulatory and administrative environment for five key areas in 25 cities in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Slovakia.



EU cities can play an important role in putting in place the right conditions for local businesses to grow and create jobs. At the same time, the size does not always matter. Below are some of the highlights from the second series of reports, published by the Commission and the World

Bank, which provide valuable input on what supports and what hinders entrepreneurs when setting up and expanding businesses across the EU.

Overall, the analysis – which focused on starting a business, dealing with construction permits, enforcing contracts, getting electricity, and registering property – reveals uneven performance not only among EU Member States but also within each of the four countries featured.

For instance, in **Croatia**, entrepreneurs in the smaller cities of Varaždin and Osijek face fewer hurdles than their peers in the country's largest cities. Starting a business is easier in Split, dealing with construction permits and getting electricity works best in Varaždin, while Osijek stands out for its performance in registering property and enforcing contracts.

In the three largest cities in the **Czech Republic** – Prague, Brno and Ostrava – doing business is much easier than elsewhere in the country. The capital Prague ranks first in accessing electricity and enforcing contracts, whilst Brno, the second largest city, outperforms its peers when dealing with construction permits. Another large Czech city, Ostrava, is the national champion in registering property.

In **Portugal**, the city of Porto comes first in dealing with construction permits. Getting electricity and enforcing contracts is easier for companies in Coimbra, whilst registering property requires less red tape in Faro, Funchal and Ponta Delgada. Unlike in the other three Member States in the study, individual Portuguese cities tend to lead in different sectors.

Prešov and Žilina rank top when starting a business in **Slovakia**. Getting construction permits is more efficient in Prešov, whilst access to electricity is easier in Žilina. Trnava stands out for its performance in registering property, and Kosice in enforcing contracts. As in Croatia, smaller cities are often more business friendly as they vie to compete with the Slovakian capital, Bratislava.



Darko Horvat, Minister of Economy, Croatia



Vittoria Allia Di Villafranca, European Commission



Elisabetta Capannelli, World Bank

“ *Doing Business in the EU* plays an important role in creating the right conditions for successful public policies and attracting investment in the EU regions. ”

Identifying good practice

Of particular importance is the fact that the most marked differences in each country emerge where local authorities have the greatest autonomy to develop and implement regulations, such as construction permits, accessing electricity and enforcing contracts.

The report builds a strong case for targeted interventions designed to seize the existing opportunities for promoting regulatory efficiency and quality by capitalising on economies of scale and investing in administrative modernisation. To this end, the analysis also helps national and local decision-makers by identifying existing good-practice solutions to improve local business environments and save companies time and money.

‘Doing Business in the EU’ plays an important role in creating the right conditions for successful public policies and attracting investment in the EU regions. Cohesion Policy invests the bulk of its funding in less-developed regions and countries, which tend to have a less-favourable business environment. As a result, reducing the delays and costs faced by firms will be critical to help these regions and countries catch up with the rest of the EU.

Both the 7th Cohesion Report and the Commission’s Report on competitiveness in low-income and low-growth regions have emphasised the need to improve public administration and make procedures more transparent and efficient. For instance, introducing online platforms for registration, services and guidance is particularly important for small and medium-sized enterprises to help them deal with administrative demands and to identify sources of and access to funding. Reducing the time necessary for building permits is crucial for key infrastructures.



A helping hand

The Commission is actively cooperating with the EU Member States and regions to improve the effectiveness of public investment on the ground and to unleash their full potential for generating growth and jobs. Together with the World Bank, a series of joint actions have been undertaken to help regions catch up, especially in Poland, Slovakia and Croatia.

Commenting on the findings, Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy said: ‘The future Cohesion Policy for 2021-2027 will continue to support Member States’ efforts to make EU regions more attractive places to work and invest in.’

This report is the second in a series of subnational ‘doing reports’ funded by the Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. The first series, published in 2017, covered cities in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania (*Panorama* 62, page 28). ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/2zHUK77>



Road Trip Project – what a journey!

Eight young people have finished the trip of their lives. They have travelled across Europe in the Road Trip Project to explore EU-supported projects and initiatives. They have discovered there is more to Europe than they imagined, and more that unites us.

Over four months, the travellers crossed Europe in teams of two following four routes: across the Mediterranean, along the Atlantic coast, through the Baltics and along the Danube. The pace was non-stop.

From eight countries and different backgrounds, each traveller brought a unique perspective to their own month-long journey. They crossed over 20 countries, visited more than

50 projects, tasted amazing local foods, tried new experiences and made countless new friends.

A final meet-up in Berlin was the chance for everyone to share and compare their experiences, whether it was cleaning litter from the Mediterranean, visiting an art centre that crosses two time zones, or walking among treetops in Lithuania.

Are you inspired to explore Europe for yourself? Visit the Road Trip website to discover more, recorded for us all in the travellers' blogs and videos. ■

FIND OUT MORE
<https://roadtripproject.eu/>

"When I thought about Europe, I thought about a blue flag with yellow stars in it and actually Europe is nothing more than countries together. A mosaic of different people, but all the same people."

Louis (21, Belgium, Mediterranean route)



"The constant change of the landscape, the road, each new day, each new friend, those are the things I value the most ... I'm proud to be from Ecuador, I'm proud to be living in Lithuania and now I'm proud to be a European resident."

Fabian (25, Ecuadorian living in Vilnius, Lithuania, Atlantic route)



"The basic thing you can get out of the Road Trip is how people can work together, how different countries can cooperate together. We can all cooperate together and make things work out."

Achilleas (22, Greece, Baltic route)



"I learned a lot: about Europe, our environment, nature and people. I got inspired and touched and I hope the videos did the same to you."

Yldau (24, Netherlands, Atlantic route)



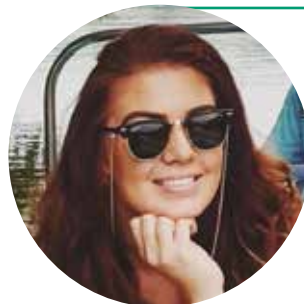
"Don't be afraid to talk to people. That's just the one thing, approach everybody!"

Kenneth (20, Ireland, Danube route)



I learned so much about myself, who I am, about different countries and cultures, their history, what they have been through and what they want from the future."

Susann (21, Estonia, Danube route)



"We should never forget all these projects we visited; they come from people who want to make a change in society."

Luisa (26, Germany, Mediterranean route)



"For me, the Road Trip Project is about connecting with people we met on the road. It's also about travelling, about discovering new things."

Luna (23, Spain, Baltic route)





Rio-Antirrio Bridge, Gulf of Corinth, Greece



Becoming real Finnish fishermen, Tornio, Finland



Artisanal fish canning in Burela, Spain



PlantCult, Thessaloniki, Greece



Vinovert: tasting wine in Bordeaux, France



Gabarage: the coolest design store in Vienna, Austria



New concert hall in Szczecin, Poland



Andere Baustelle, finding an alternative career path in Ulm, Germany



Achilleas and Luna



Yldau and Fabian



Kenneth and Susann

BALTIC

28 July – 25 August



Louis and Luisa

ATLANTIC

19 May – 16 June

DANUBE

23 June – 21 July

MEDITERRANEAN

14 April – 12 May



EU IN MY REGION

Telling the story of EU-funded projects

Hospital in Kalisz, Poland: effects of thermos-modernisation works – Andrzej Kurzynski

#EuinmyRegion has enabled citizens to discover thousands of EU-funded projects and to share stories about them via blogging and photo contests.

The best way to spread information about the impacts of EU projects and programmes is to let citizens discover those in their neighbourhood. That is what #EuinmyRegion is about: a chance to learn, engage, participate and win.

The campaign is organised around four initiatives: the EU Projects Open Days, a blogging contest, a photo contest and an online quiz. These activities encourage citizens to visit and discover EU-funded projects and share images, blog posts, videos and experiences about them via social media.

Open Days and blogs

This year's EU Projects Open Days were held mainly during May. Beneficiaries of EU funds welcomed hundreds of thousands of citizens to their project sites in more than 2000 venues across the European Union.

The blogging competition encouraged stories – blog posts or videos – in any EU language on projects co-funded by the EU.

From the 120 entries submitted, the jury picked three winners: Radu Dumitrescu from Romania, for his personal account of the Erasmus+ European Youth Weeks project; Amaury Bisiaux from France, who travelled around Europe by train and described the new DiscoverEU initiative; and Maria Giner Soler from Spain, who reported on innovative SMEs supported by regional funds.

The winners will enjoy a three-week EU communications course in Brussels in October 2018.

Quiz and photos



Finally, eight lucky winners of the online quiz on European culture and traditions each received a basket of European delicacies.

The photo competition draws attention to crucial investments made in Europe's regions thanks to the European Union. To enter the competition, citizens had to take and send in a photo of a project co-funded by the EU. Of the 530 photos submitted, the jury selected 30 winning pictures, based on their aesthetic quality, creativity and relevance to the competition theme.

The winners are:

- › Florian Juritsch
- › Fabrice Serodes
- › Lyubomila Dimitrova
- › Sophie Pedroso
- › Emmanuel Lemaigen
- › Marjorie Baque
- › Adrien Staquet and Sophie Balzing
- › Michael Lamla
- › Michail Amoiridis
- › Carmela Gioia
- › Filippo Cioffi
- › Giovanni Sogari
- › Giuseppe Pignotti and Margherita Maggi
- › Aigars Ievins
- › Alex Kaousche
- › Bram Gesink
- › Adrian Krać
- › Andrzej Kurzynski
- › Karolina Nawrot and Michał Szkudlarek
- › Eduardo Ventura and Hugo Alexandre dos Santos Couto
- › Maria Gabriela Riglea and Vasile Stoica
- › Marek Vcelka
- › Susanna Včelková and Patrik Vaclavik
- › Zane Sime

The pictures have now been compiled into an exhibition which is travelling around Europe. The opening stage will be in Brussels during the European Week of Regions and Cities, in October 2018. ■

FIND OUT MORE

www.euinmyregion.eu



Port de Vilanova i la Geltrú, Spain: fisherman cleaning his lobster pots and boat – Sophie Pedroso



Blast Furnaces Belval, Luxembourg – Alex Kaousche



Start-rails behind dehydrated sludge silos at the Barreiro/Moita waste-water treatment plant, Portugal – Eduardo Ventura

YOUTH4MEDIA

The Youth4Regions media programme supports the development of the next generation of journalists specialised in regional policy. It encourages these young Europeans to communicate on EU-funded projects.



A great opportunity for the younger generation

Below we present the first of four winning texts in the YOUTH4MEDIA blogging competition for young journalists.



With a population of 437 000, Kirklees, in West Yorkshire in the north of England, is home to the 11th largest local government district in the United Kingdom. The area has received at least £20 million (around EUR 2.2 million) over the past 10 years, mainly from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), to support job creation, innovation and projects for young entrepreneurs.

The ERDF invested £1.8million to transform a former gas-works into Bretton Business Park in Dewsbury which, in turn, created around 130 new jobs and many thriving new businesses.

The most popular and successful project involved the Kirklees Youth Enterprise Centre (Kyec), which is partly financed through the ERDF 2007-2013 programme. Set up in Huddersfield's Creative and Media Studio School, the centre received over £4.9million to provide students aged 14-19 with the necessary skills and financial backing to start their own enterprises.

“The ERDF has helped to create jobs and businesses in the Kirklees area ... However, with Brexit looming, what does the future hold?”

The students were taught how to write a business plan and set up their business. The school also ran several ‘test trading’ businesses to give them a taste of dealing with real clients and genuine issues. Their goal was to create a strong business plan to present to a panel of business experts. If their plans were well done they had the chance of securing a £5 000 grant to set up and run their own enterprise, supported by a business adviser and mentor.

To date, this programme has helped 67 young entrepreneurs to start a business in the Kirklees region. One such entrepreneur is Zoe Ann who studied photography at the University of Huddersfield because she had always wanted to be a wedding photographer. While still at university, aged 18, she set up her business with help from the KYEC. She graduated in 2017 and went full time in her own company, using the knowledge and grant from the programme.

Max Lockwood made headlines in the Yorkshire press in 2015 when his business plan was awarded a grant. The young entrepreneur with Down syndrome launched OUR T-SHIRT with the aim of spreading awareness of his genetic condition. Some of his T-shirt designs are built around chromosome 21, with one featuring a music keyboard with 20 black keys and one red one. He also prints T-shirts to customers’ own designs or pictures.



Maria Ward-Brennan is 21 and comes from Carrickmacross, County Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland. She is currently in the final year of a journalism course at the University of Huddersfield in West Yorkshire, UK. She lists travelling, reading and politics among her interests and is hoping to move to France in the future.

The ERDF has helped to create jobs and businesses in the Kirklees area and throughout the UK, providing a unique opportunity for the younger generation. However, with Brexit looming, what

does the future hold? With EU funding set to stop in March 2019, there is no clear picture of where funding for new businesses will come from.

And who will fund opportunities for innovation like those provided by the KYEC programme? No one seems to know what the future holds for local businesses in the Kirklees region, which will soon have to manage without European funding. ■



Meet the Urban Agenda for the EU!

The Urban Agenda for the EU is a European integrated and coordinated approach towards urban issues involving actors at EU, national, regional and local levels.

The UA¹ was born in May 2016 through the Pact of Amsterdam². In this founding document, EU ministers responsible for urban matters agreed to focus on three pillars of EU policy making and implementation: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge.

The initiative, based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, has **gathered urban, regional, national and European authorities and stakeholder organisations** from across Europe with one objective: to find common responses to the rising number of urban challenges.

Since the launch of the UA, **12 partnerships**³ have been set up: partnerships on the inclusion of migrants and refugees, air quality, housing and urban poverty kick-started the initiative in 2016. Most are currently implementing their action plans. Those established in 2017, dealing with digital transition, circular economy, urban mobility, and jobs and skills in the local economy, have also made concrete proposals in the form of (draft) action plans, which are now being implemented or fine-tuned.

The youngest partnerships, working on energy transition, climate adaptation, innovative and responsible public procurement, and sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, joined the UA community during the summer of 2017 and are currently working on draft action plans, expected to be finalised next year. **All partnerships**

consulted the public while drafting these action plans, submitting them for online feedback prior to their finalisation and acknowledgement by the Member States.

The Urban Agenda for the EU is well aware of the **importance of reaching out**. Hence, communication with the general public not only occurs via public surveys, but also through a dedicated website, Twitter, e-mail, a newsletter, and partnership events.

The upcoming European Week of Regions and Cities is another example of the UA meeting the public: At this year's event, visitors can find out more in the Urban Corner, hosted in collaboration with EURO CITIES, the Joint Research Centre (JRC), URBACT, Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) and URBIS. Games, presentations, networking and virtual reality experiences will showcase some of the many ideas on how to **improve the quality of life in urban areas**. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.urbanagendaforthe.eu>

Twitter: @EUUrbanAgenda

E-mail: UA.communication@ecorys.com

¹ See Panorama No.58, page 4: <http://ec.europa.eu/!xN38Yu>

² <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/content/pact-amsterdam>

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda>

THE WORKING TIMELINE FOR A PARTNERSHIP (AROUND THREE YEARS)

1.

Stocktaking
(identification of
existing work and
existing sources of
funding and
expertise)

2.

Identifying
bottlenecks and
potential

3.

Developing
an action plan (a
set of concrete
actions and a
roadmap for their
implementation)

4.

Implementing the
action plan

5.

Evaluating the
partnership



"The Urban Agenda is an inclusive, participatory instrument that aims to reach a better Europe. It works from the ground, giving voice to cities so that they can establish a direct dialogue with Member States and the European Commission

(...) expressing their needs with freedom, conscious to be part of a new experimental process. This is interesting and challenging at the same time because medium and small cities are probably not used to working for the EU (...), but it is a really great opportunity to (...) be part of this new mechanism, to put in place initiatives that work on a common vision for a new strategy to co-design a new urban area, able to face priority themes with a wider awareness."

Stefania Manca

Coordinator of the Partnership
on Adaptation to Climate Change

"The actions we present are concrete actions to realise a city where residents and entrepreneurs do not think in terms of waste, but in terms of resources with permanent economic and social value. A city where urban resource centres are social and economic hubs for residents and enterprises to meet each other and collaborate on circular resource management. European legislation entices local authorities, companies and investors to make the most of all types of waste, and also water. (...) There are also accessible tools that guide the city through the different funding possibilities and assist funders who are interesting and directing their funds to investments in the circular transition."



Håkon Jentoft

Coordinator of the Partnership on Circular Economy

THE URBAN ACADEMY ON INTEGRATION

The Urban Academy on Integration⁴ is one of the first actions to be implemented. Developed by the partnership on inclusion of migrants and refugees, it seeks to act as a European strategic learning environment for practitioners and policymakers working on integration at the local, regional and national level, and to provide an opportunity to create networks of peers focusing on similar integration issues across Europe. The first edition, which took place on 16-18 April 2018 in Brussels, was a success. A second edition will be held in spring 2019.



"We reach out to cities outside of our partnership by participating in coordinator meetings, networking sessions and also in external events such as the Procura+ seminar in Oslo earlier this year, or the upcoming EWRC in October in Brussels."

Valentina Schippers-Opejko

Coordinator of the Partnership on Innovative and
Responsible Public Procurement

⁴ <https://europa.eu/!qM49GV>

Integrate to innovate

The EUROCITIES network includes over 140 of Europe's largest cities and more than 40 partner cities. Marton Matko, a EUROCITIES policy advisor, assesses the latest Commission action on urban policy.



You are involved in several partnerships for the Urban Agenda. What next steps are important to involve cities further in the design and implementation of urban policy?

EUROCITIES is committed to supporting the Urban Agenda for the EU. It is a crucial milestone towards a more comprehensive and practical approach to urban matters in Europe.

For the first time, cities are in dialogue with national governments and European Commission services to make policies and programmes more useful for urban challenges. The partnerships are coming up with practical proposals on how to improve regulation, funding and knowledge on

common EU priorities, such as air quality, waste reuse, climate action or refugee integration.

At the HABITAT III conference, the EU made a commitment to implement the Agenda as its contribution to the UN's New Urban Agenda. We believe that Member States and EU institutions have a common responsibility to better engage with and support the initiative to deliver useful, tangible results.

A next step would be to replicate the working method in a national or regional context. Some Member States and regions are testing such initiatives, but the working method could also be applied more broadly, for example in Cohesion Policy programming.

What are the main improvements in the new Cohesion Policy framework in terms of promoting a truly integrated, place-based approach?

We appreciate that the Commission's proposals for the new Cohesion Policy framework reflect many of the recommendations of the high-level group for the simplification of European Structural and Investment Funds. Besides reducing the burden on beneficiaries, they considerably streamline the management of the funds, which should allow faster start-up and implementation.

We also welcome the idea of interim re-programming to better respond to emerging challenges. We also expect that Member States will appreciate the

“ *The integrated approach is not an abstract concept. In reality, people live in places like urban neighbourhoods, rural towns or remote villages, not in policy silos.* ”

flexibility offered by the new policy objective for integrated territorial development. However, we are keen to see stronger guarantees for cities and local authorities to be properly involved in shaping programme priorities.

What is missing most from the urban dimension of the proposed post-2020 cohesion policy?

We are really concerned about some changes that go against an integrated, place-based approach. Apart from the departure of the rural development fund, we are very disappointed that the European Social Fund Plus seems to entirely abandon the integrated territorial approach.

This would make it extremely troublesome for cities to set up complex programmes that involve both physical facilities and support services, such as fostering social inclusion and integration in deprived neighbourhoods. EUROCITIES proposes changes in both the common provisions and ESF+ regulations that would allow for an easier combination of funds, supporting integrated urban and territorial strategies.

Second, we would like thematic concentration rules to better support cities to tackle urban challenges through an integrated approach. We propose to increase the focus on climate and green investments, which should also include sustainable urban mobility.

In parallel, we ask for more flexibility in selecting the other policy objectives and for a slight reduction in the overall

thresholds. Cities use Cohesion Policy to innovate across all policy objectives, for example using digital technologies to improve access to mobility and social services.

In fact, we would like to see even more ambition to innovate in urban governance. A large part of Cohesion Policy is invested in cities and suburbs. However, around 8% of the ERDF is invested using an innovative working method based on comprehensive strategies drawn up and implemented by urban authorities together with a broad spectrum of local stakeholders. This method is already bearing fruit. City officials have started working in cross-departmental teams, involving local communities, while core cities and neighbouring towns now collaborate for the benefit of the wider region.

This is probably one of the most important systemic innovations in Cohesion Policy. Therefore, we propose to increase the allocation for sustainable urban development from 6 to 10% of the ERDF and to extend it to ESF+.

The Commission proposes to offer coherent support to cities from 2020. How does EUROCITIES plan to contribute to the European Urban Initiative? Why is it so important that cities tackle their challenges in an integrated way?

The integrated approach is not an abstract concept. In reality, people live in places like urban neighbourhoods, rural towns or remote villages, not in policy silos. Helping deprived neighbourhoods become more

liveable calls for different city departments, such as housing, social services, infrastructure, mobility and environment, to work together.

Cities are constantly testing new ways to collaborate and to engage residents in co-creating solutions. We must provide local officials with the right skills and support experimentation to grow this innovation potential. URBACT and Urban Innovative Actions have achieved a lot in this field and should be reinforced. The European Urban Initiative could strengthen the synergies between these programmes and create a much-needed link with mainstream Cohesion Policy.

It is worth remembering that better coordination of EU instruments is one of the main objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU. EUROCITIES is very keen to explore with DG REGIO how we could best contribute to making the European Urban Initiative more useful for cities. We support all practical improvements that help Cohesion Policy bring Europe closer to its citizens. ■



FIND OUT MORE

www.eurocities.eu



Building city-to-city relationships for a more sustainable future

Yokohama, Japan

Ronald Hall, Senior External Expert and former Principal Advisor to DG REGIO, gives his personal perspective on the EU's International Urban Cooperation programme.

More than half of the world's population now lives in cities. Urban centres are the source of growth and development. As such, they are magnets for rural dwellers seeking opportunities to earn higher incomes, access high-quality services such as education and health care, and secure a better future for their children.

This shift from lower productivity activities in the rural areas, principally traditional agriculture, to more added-value ones in urban areas in manufacturing and many service sectors, is key to how economies grow. It is the path taken historically by all the world's most developed countries and, as such, is the model being adopted, in effect, by emerging countries across the globe.

The benefits of urbanisation resulting, in particular, from the resource-intensive model of urban development which characterised the growth of industrial nations in the 20th century, has come at a price. It has led to the depletion of natural

resources – including nature itself – and pollution of the air, rivers and oceans, which now threaten the quality of life in the metropolises of the developed world.

For the developing and emerging countries – where urbanisation and economic growth go hand in hand – it is important that the lessons learned from the industrial world are fully understood. In this way, good practices that have been developed by national and city authorities over recent decades, and the mistakes which have been made historically, can be taken on-board in urban policy in emerging countries.

In pursuit of the win-win

Such cooperation creates win-win situations. While the industrial nations have much to demonstrate after a century or more of urbanisation, it is equally true that the emerging economies, perhaps less fettered by tradition, have many innovative solutions to share with the industrial economies. Indeed, some of the world's largest urban centres are to be found in the emerging economies in countries such as China and India, as well as in Latin America.

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy has formalised 14 regional and urban policy dialogues, including 6 EU 'strategic partners' (China, Russia, Brazil, Mexico, Japan and India) as well as the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia) and Latin American countries (Argentina, Chile, Peru, Colombia) and the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Even in the absence of such agreements, cooperation has been developed with other strategic partners, like Canada and South Africa, and regional groupings such as CARICOM (Caribbean Community), ASEAN (Asia), SACU (southern Africa) and UEMOA (West Africa).

But perhaps the overwhelming need for cooperation and knowledge-sharing derives from the joint interest across countries and continents in preserving the planet itself. There is an urgent need to develop together a model of urbanisation that is sustainable, preserves nature and natural resources, and lowers the emissions that pollute our cities, harm our children's health and contribute to global warming. This is the reason why sustainable urbanisation is central to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations and which, in turn, has led, among other things, to the New Urban Agenda (NUA) adopted by over 170 countries in Quito, Ecuador in 2016.

The EU takes the challenge of sustainable urbanisation very seriously. The Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu, representing the EU in Quito in 2016, committed the EU to devoting knowledge and resources to advancing the NUA. This has both an internal dimension inside the EU, where it has developed the EU Urban Agenda to guide its urban development programmes in the 28 Member States and, as mentioned below, an external dimension through its diplomatic relations with non-EU countries.

A force for sustainable urban development

The key vehicle for taking forward the external dimension today is the **International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme (2017-2019)** which has an essential component that supports EU and non-EU city authorities to work together on sustainable urban development themes. The IUC is based on five years of pilot actions, notably under the EU's **World Cities** project and the **URBELAC** project.



Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu speaking during a recent visit to China

The IUC is establishing urban cooperation platforms with China, India, Japan, Latin America and North America. Its programme marks the coming of age of EU policy to promote international cooperation between cities. Under IUC city-to-city cooperation, some 70 participating cities on each side establish new city-to-city cooperation agreements for sustainable urban development. This involves the preparation of local action plans for integrated urban development. Fundamentally, these plans give priority to cooperation within the sectors of the EU Urban Agenda and the NUA.

Drawing on the World Cities project experience, the cities use a multi-stakeholder approach, applying the knowledge and experience of the public authorities, business, the research

Under World Cities (2015-2018), EU cities have cooperated in a pairing arrangement with city counterparts in Canada, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia and South Africa. The pairings have exchanged experience on themes such as smart city development, energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable mobility, etc. Under URBELAC (2011-2019), which is now entering its fourth edition, the European Commission and the Inter-American Development Bank have been supporting cities drawn from the EU and Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) cities. It has created an EU-LAC network promoting exchange of experiences, benchmarking and the preparation of action plans. Both World Cities and URBELAC are the tangible result of the European Parliament's support for international diplomacy at the city level.





Medellin, Colombia



Udaipur, India



Zhengzhou, China



Montreal, Canada

“ There is an urgent need to develop together a model of urbanisation that is sustainable, preserves nature and natural resources, and lowers the emissions that pollute our cities, harm our children’s health and contribute to global warming. ”

community and civil society. The EU’s own URBACT programme for urban networking is being used as a key source of knowledge and experience to support local action planning.

IUC city-to-city has led to the development of joint pilot projects, while MoUs ensuring their long-term future have been signed between public authorities, research agencies and business representatives on both sides.

Setting a good example

For instance, under the IUC, the city of Parma (Italy) was paired with Fredericton (Canada). The Canadian city’s Department of Heritage and Urban Planning, Growth and Community Services is cooperating with Parma’s Equal Opportunities Office and European Project Office. Aiming to enhance local democracy, the two sides are working on identifying the barriers that hinder

the political participation of marginalised groups and their root causes, and on possible policies and mechanisms to eliminate them and create a more inclusive urban environment.

The Italian city of Bologna (Italy) is collaborating with Austin (United States) on various issues ranging from developing a more healthy local food system and improving resource efficiency to enhancing resilience to climate change. City governance issues have been high on the agenda and, for example, Austin has drawn the conclusion that its Office of Sustainability and the Office of Economic Development need to develop closer coordination.

Rotterdam (the Netherlands) is working with Surat (India). The cities are focusing on tackling issues related to water management, such as ensuring the quality of drinking water, mitigating water pollution from industrial run-off, protecting against flooding, and effectively treating sewage. In Rotterdam, Surat has found a knowledgeable partner with a wealth of water-management experience. In Surat, Rotterdam has found a city dealing with issues on a much larger scale, which has already inspired the Dutch city to think differently about the challenges they face. ■

FIND OUT MORE

- <http://europa.eu/!Pr79bv>
- <http://www.iuc.eu/>
- <http://world-cities.eu/>



Christian Specht, First Deputy Mayor of the City of Mannheim

Mannheim, paired with Chongqing under the IUC

What has been the added value of Mannheim's participation in the IUC programme? What are the main outcomes for you?

Through the continuous support of the IUC team and the European Commission, and working together with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of the People's Republic of China, effective cooperation, including exchange visits on both sides, has enabled rapid progress to be made in our relationship with Chongqing. Furthermore, the IUC generated much interest in our actions with China, which was taken up by the media, bringing Mannheim to international attention. Initial results, such as the planned inauguration of the direct railway connection between Mannheim and Chongqing in October 2018, as well as a high-level international conference in cooperation with the German trade journal Handelsblatt in 2019, are major achievements of the cooperation after only 16 months of project implementation.

What is the place of the city in international cooperation? Do you believe in the idea of 'city diplomacy'?

Cities are main actors when it comes to implementing new solutions and, in that way, to improving their citizens' quality of life. International exchange between such key actors enables the development of innovative ideas and acts as a knowledge multiplier. When cities are involved in international strategies, the actions undertaken tend to become more practical, pragmatic and solution-orientated, and there is less likelihood of pursuing purely political interests. Perhaps in particular at a time of rising anti-European sentiment and growing nationalistic tendencies, cities' and regions' leaders can play a key role in helping to build bridges and overcome disaffection. Hence, in my view, city diplomacy should become an integral part of the external policies of the European Union, including when it comes to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

What advice would you give to the mayor of a European city about entering into the IUC programme for the first time?

The IUC programme expects rapid implementation and to achieve this it offers regular technical assistance, guidance and financial support. Furthermore, in the case of Mannheim, we found that the high-level support of both the European Commission and China's NDRC meant that we had direct access to key decision-makers and leading business representatives who are much more difficult to contact when acting on city initiative alone. Therefore, I highly recommend participation in the IUC programme for any city planning to become more involved in the global economy through boosting international cooperation, in a way that delivers rapid and measurable results. In addition, I recommend involving local businesses and research partners right from the beginning of the process as most of the actions and goals within our IUC project result from a round table with local companies and Chinese partners to match respective goals and interests.



Lithuania: finding a smarter way to regional growth

Since its accession to the EU in 2004, Lithuania has made significant improvements across its trade and business sectors to comply with the Union's demanding standards. Although EU investments have helped to stimulate growth and jobs, this transitioning country must now focus on business and education to boost its competitiveness at home and abroad.

Covering an area of 65 300 square kilometres and with a population of just under 3 million, Lithuania is the largest and most southerly of the three Baltic republics. Situated in Eastern Europe along the Baltic Sea, it is bordered by Latvia to the north, Belarus to the south and east, Poland to the south, and Russia (Kaliningrad exclave) to the south-west.

Featuring many scattered small lakes and fertile soil across its lowlands, its natural resources include arable land, peat and fossilised resin amber. During the years of EU membership, Lithuania has dramatically shifted its exports to EU markets – up to 70% in 2017 for goods of Lithuanian origin. Nevertheless, its government is pursuing a high-profile campaign to attract foreign investment to the country and further develop export markets.

In 2017, its gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 3.9%, while growth for 2018 is forecast at 3.2%. Thanks to its advantageous geographical location, it enjoys highly developed transport connections, a modern seaport, a thriving IT network, and a highly educated but cheap labour force.

Lithuania's well-developed private-enterprise economy is oriented towards the manufacturing and service industries, including food, the petroleum and chemical industries, IT, financial services, transport, construction, biotechnologies, research and development, and tourism.

Learning curve

With an unemployment rate of 7% in 2017 and a labour force totalling 1.467 million, labour market conditions continue to improve. The country is one of the most educated on the continent, with the highest proportion of graduates among 30-34 year olds, according to Eurostat. Studying online is very popular and nearly all young professionals speak English.

Infrastructure, a business-friendly mindset, a growing talent pool and some of the lowest salaries in Europe are a big draw, particularly for foreign investment. However, Lithuania needs to focus on making companies more dynamic and competitive, and adapting the education and training system in line with labour market needs.

In 2016, the most important sectors of Lithuania's economy were: wholesale and retail trade, transport, accommodation and food services (32.2%); industry (22.1%); and public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities (14.5%).

Its leading export is refined petroleum, followed by fertilisers, wheat, machinery and equipment, chemicals, plastics, textiles and foodstuffs. Compared to the EU average, the country has a large manufacturing sector based mainly on low- to medium-technology industries.

The thriving ICT sector has already attracted some of the largest technology companies in the Baltic States with IT, laser technologies, biotechnology, nanotechnology and material science playing a growing role in the country's economy.

Historically, agriculture has played an important social and economic role in Lithuania, representing the second largest sector in the country's economy. Farmland currently makes up 60% of the total surface area, with forestry at 32% and 42% of the population living in rural areas.

Following EU accession in 2004, the sector underwent radical reform to comply with the Union's very high food safety standards. In 2016, agricultural and food products, including grain, potatoes, sugar beet, flax, vegetables, beef, milk, eggs, pork, cheese and fish, accounted for 19.4% of Lithuania's exports. Organic farming is also growing and the country now has the second largest area dedicated to this among the Baltic States. >



IMPACT OF COHESION POLICY INVESTMENTS IN LITHUANIA



RAPID CONVERGENCE TO THE EU AVERAGE: throughout 2004-2016, Lithuania climbed up the convergence ladder by 25 percentage points from approximately **50%** of the EU average of GDP per capita in 2004 to **75%** in 2016. These figures show the country has reached the threshold between the less-developed and transition regions. Without EU investments, GDP per capita would have been almost 4 percentage points lower.



MITIGATION OF NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS: EU funds not only contributed to the growth of GDP and employment but also helped to reduce the negative impact of the recent economic crisis. In that period, it helped to maintain public investments at a reasonable level (during 2010-2012, EU funds constituted almost **80% of total public investments** in Lithuania).



MORE AND BETTER JOBS: in 2015, the employment rate among people aged 15-64 rose by around 1.4 percentage points while the unemployment rate was lower by 2.3 percentage points on average. Moreover, **61% of the jobs created** are considered to be of high or very high quality (i.e. jobs that require higher qualifications and create more value added). Furthermore, almost half (47%) of the jobs created are considered permanent.



SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR SMES: EU funds played a crucial role in funding SMEs during the economic crisis credit crunch, helping many firms to stay in business. Approximately 60% of loans went to support working capital, keeping businesses afloat. EU funding also maintained investments in new technology and improving production processes. In the programming period 2007-2013, **11 000 SMEs** gained access to financing investments and **2 400 private companies** used EU funds to innovate.



BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS: a substantial number of landfill sites which did not comply with EU standards were closed while the volume of waste recycled increased by over 10 percentage points. From 2011-2015, as a result of developing the water supply and wastewater-treatment infrastructure, the share of people not connected to the wastewater-treatment network fell by **24%**, while the proportion of people not connected to the water supply network declined by **15%**.



CONTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE OBJECTIVES, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIELD OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY: EU funds are the main source of financing for energy-efficiency measures in multi-apartment buildings. By the end of 2015, 4.4% of those built before 1993 had been renovated. By the end of 2014, energy-efficiency measures implemented in 5.4% of public buildings had **reduced the overall annual energy consumption by almost 3%**.



ENSURED ACCESS TO VERY FAST BROADBAND INTERNET: EU funding contributed to creating Lithuania's broadband internet infrastructure. In 2012, **broadband internet covered 97%** of the country's territory, while 35% of all e-services were created using EU funds.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION POWERS THE POTENTIAL OF VISAGINAS



Visaginas is still a city with much to offer even though the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, previously its primary employer, is no longer in operation. To move from a typical mono-industrial city to a modern regional centre with a favourable environment for business is crucial to the city's economy.

As part of this process, a new industrial park is being created to generate innovative technology solutions and manufacturing innovation. The Smart Park Visaginas project aims to adapt a former military base into a site for innovative industry.

The project is cleaning up the site and removing or reorganising derelict buildings and infrastructure. The regenerated site will house small and medium-sized businesses, along with research and experimental development projects. It also aims to attract major investments to the area.

For example, Europe's leading manufacturer of medical devices for respiratory support is investing EUR 10 million to build its second production plant in Lithuania. The company intends to recruit about 200 engineering, manufacturing and research and development specialists in the first stage of the development.

The Visaginas branch of the company, which is already developing partnerships within the city, plans to increase the number of employees to 1 000 over the next 10 years. Since 2016, it has been providing apprenticeships for mechatronics students from the local vocational school.

Over EUR 2.9 million has been allocated for project implementation, with almost EUR 1.3 million provided by the EU.

SMART MOVES AT KLAIPĖDA UNIVERSITY

The 'Development of the Marine Valley Nucleus and Renewal of Study Infrastructure (JURA), Stage II' project has been carried out on the Klaipėda University campus. General and technological research and development and innovation infrastructure are being pursued in a new scientific laboratory building and supported with R&D equipment, all of which is contributing to the renewal and development of the R&D infrastructure in the smart specialisation sector.

The latest R&D infrastructure has been designated for scientific research, R&D commercialisation and for marine environment and marine technological research under experimental (technological) development in the areas of biomedicine, physical sciences and engineering, making good use of the newly equipped laboratories.

The results of the project include the creation of 80 general jobs in scientific research within the new R&D infrastructure; and the setting up of four scientific laboratories, three of which are fully equipped. Overall, the project has reinforced research activities, stimulating new cooperation agreements in science and research area with other economic entities, such as research institutions and business, thereby boosting R&D commercialisation processes.

The project was financed from the EU Structural Funds and the state budget.



COMBINING SKILLS AT VILNIUS JOINT LIFE SCIENCES CENTER



A modern centre was set up to in the Lithuanian capital cater for research, studies and technological development in the areas of biotechnology and molecular medicine. Each year it provides research facilities for over 200 researchers, more than 160 PhD students, about 80 technicians and approximately 300 students graduating with Bachelor or Master's degrees. It also incorporates a 'bioincubator' where start-ups involving students and researchers are located.

The facility has become an example of a new type of multi-layer collaboration between education institutions and businesses. Costing EUR 41 075 805, of which EUR 37 757 019 was provided by the ERDF, it is designed to attract more students to the emerging field of biotechnologies and molecular medicine and to develop their practical skills in relation to smart specialisation priorities.

The centre is also home to prominent scientists: Professor S. Klimašauskas recently received the prestigious European Research Council Advanced Researcher grant, and in 2016, Professor V. Šikšnyš was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

FIND OUT MORE

www.gmc.vu.lt



BROADBAND REACHES OUT TO RURAL AREAS

During the implementation of the projects RAIN and RAIN-2, fibre-optic cable lines were laid over a distance of 9 132 kilometres. Today, 98.7% of Lithuania's population has access to broadband services. The opportunities created by these projects are already available to network operators to provide services to end-users: rural schools, libraries and public internet centres, local governments, rural residents and businesses.

A total of around 1 million inhabitants in rural areas have been reached thanks to the RAIN infrastructure which was built with a 20-year time line. The ERDF provided EUR 72 857 822 of the total expenditure of EUR 81 696 552 which was allocated to the 'Rural area information technology broadband network RAIN'.

This infrastructure opened up the possibilities of accessing, according to needs, not only texts but sounds and images too, through a continuous, reliable and safe service. The broadband network is designed in such a way that its speed can be increased without involving significant costs.

RAIN-2 was one of five winners in the European Commission's 2015 broadband Internet Awards, where a panel of international experts nominated it as the best in the 'Social and economic impact and availability' category.

FIND OUT MORE

www.placiajuostis.lt/en

IN THE FAST LANE FOR OLYMPIC GOLD IN KLAIPĖDA

The state-of-the-art swimming pool in Klaipėda is yet another significant stage in developing the urban area's outdoor and health activities. Part of the city's ambitious vision for the construction of the Olympic standard swimming pool began about a decade ago, with strong support from the region's professional sportsmen and women in response to Lithuanian swimmers' achievements in international contests.

The city administration took a broader approach and decided to construct a multifunctional centre to suit both professionals and the residents in the sporty city.

A first for the Baltic states, the pool was created by using advanced technological solutions. High priority was given to environment-friendly solutions for the pool's design: the A+ energy-efficient building houses solar installations that produce electricity for the multifunctional centre, as well as an electric vehicle charging station, etc.

The pool complies with the FINA standard: it is 50 metres long, has 10 swimming lanes, starting blocks, a timing system and a raised seated area for spectators.

More than just a swimming pool

However, the centre's basic mission is to provide for non-formal education, health and leisure activities. One of technological solutions used is the possibility to change the water depth and temperature so that the pool can be easily adapted for children's swimming lessons or sporting activities for pregnant women, water gymnastics, people with disabilities, and elderly people.



Another distinctive feature of the pool is a nine-metre deep diving pool which will be used as a special training centre. Here, members of the Lithuanian Naval Force, national underwater archaeology specialists known for their research in the Baltic Sea, and divers-rescuers will be able to develop their skills.

The construction works contract totalled EUR 16.6 million, with EUR 11.6 million allocated from the EU Structural Funds for project implementation, EUR 4 million was designated by Klaipėda City Municipality and EUR 1 million came from the state budget. ■

Flying fast and high, together

Vilius Šapoka, Lithuania's Minister of Finance, discusses how the country is using EU investments to support competitiveness and productivity.



Lithuania is making good use of EU funds for 2014-2020. What are the highlights and benefits to Lithuanians?

Our main priority today is to enhance national competitiveness and productivity. We are investing more in R&D, innovation, SMEs, and IT development. Together with EU investments, we have attracted EUR 463.8 million of private investment to support national enterprises.

Due to investments in IT infrastructure, we also have one of the fastest internet speeds in the world.

My vision is for Lithuania, for some already known as 'Li-tech-nia', to be the most favourable tax environment for high-tech investments and development. This means well-paid jobs and a leading role for our country in financial technologies, lasers, renewable energy, biotechnologies and the development of fintech companies.

Lithuania is certainly not too small to be this kind of leader – size is not as important as talented people, openness to new ideas and a clear vision. In this context, I recall a story about a caring mother who wants her son to fly safely – low and slow. Neither the young pilot nor Lithuania want this. If you really want to fly – you have to fly fast and high!

Such a Lithuania I see in the future – a brave country with intelligent, educated people, flying fast and high and sharing.

How is Cohesion Policy reaching Lithuania's real economy, strengthening business competitiveness and job creation?

From 2014 to 2020, we are allocating EUR 1 billion to promoting entrepreneurship and business development; business productivity; innovation and research; transnationality; export and business development in the regions;

lower energy consumption in industry; and competitiveness of human resources. We are also supporting companies to invest in new production technologies, process innovation and digitalisation, in the transition to 'Industry 4.0'.

Despite significant ERDF co-investments in research and innovation, Lithuania is lagging in productivity growth. What measures is the Government taking to address this issue?

According to primary data for 2017, Lithuania's nominal output per one actual worked hour grew at the most rapid pace (11%) among all EU Member States. We rank 16 out of 190 countries in the World Bank's 'Doing Business 2018'. Our 2016–2017 reform improved business conditions. A new tax system from 2019 will be very favourable for economic growth and for attracting foreign companies to Lithuania. By 2021, labour force taxation in Lithuania will

“ *Such a Lithuania I see in the future – a brave country with intelligent, educated people, flying fast and high and sharing.* ”

be the most competitive among the Baltic States. For the development of financial technologies, we have created an attractive and flexible regulatory environment.

EU investments are allocated to each stage of the innovation cycle. We are also using EU investments for more active public-sector cooperation with business.

An innovative approach to the European Structural and Investment Funds has meant the use of revolving funds and other financial engineering instruments. Can you give us an example of blending in Lithuania, i.e. use of various funds and forms of financing to address a particular issue?

We continue to develop our financial instruments. We allocated EUR 224 million of EU funds to help businesses to access finance, especially for investments in corporate capital. Measures to establish a better regulatory environment include government-financed assistance for foreign investors, the Blue Card scheme, the Start-up Visa initiative, and the latest Labour Code of Lithuania, which gives more flexibility both to business and employees. To modernise housing for greater energy efficiency, we issued government securities (green bonds) and allocated EUR 500 million of EU assistance through financial instruments.

Lithuania has achieved an impressive convergence towards the EU average GDP per capita at the same time as disparities between the Lithuanian regions remained the same or even increased as compared to the situation before EU accession. What are your views about this phenomenon? What measures is the Government taking to reverse this trend?

We are developing regional specialisation strategies, based on analysis of strengths and weaknesses, to attract businesses and people into the regions. EU investments helped us to create a good-quality infrastructure. We want to encourage municipalities to use it as effectively as possible to create new jobs and attract new investments. So we are planning to introduce a new financial incentive system for municipalities, as well as a new methodology for planning investments.

How can the Lithuanian administration contribute to the common goal of simplifying Cohesion Policy for authorities and beneficiaries?

First, it is necessary to review regulations at EU level. At national level, we review, simplify and optimise the administration processes for institutions and beneficiaries. We also use highly advanced IT solutions that reduce the administrative burden and simplify project implementation.

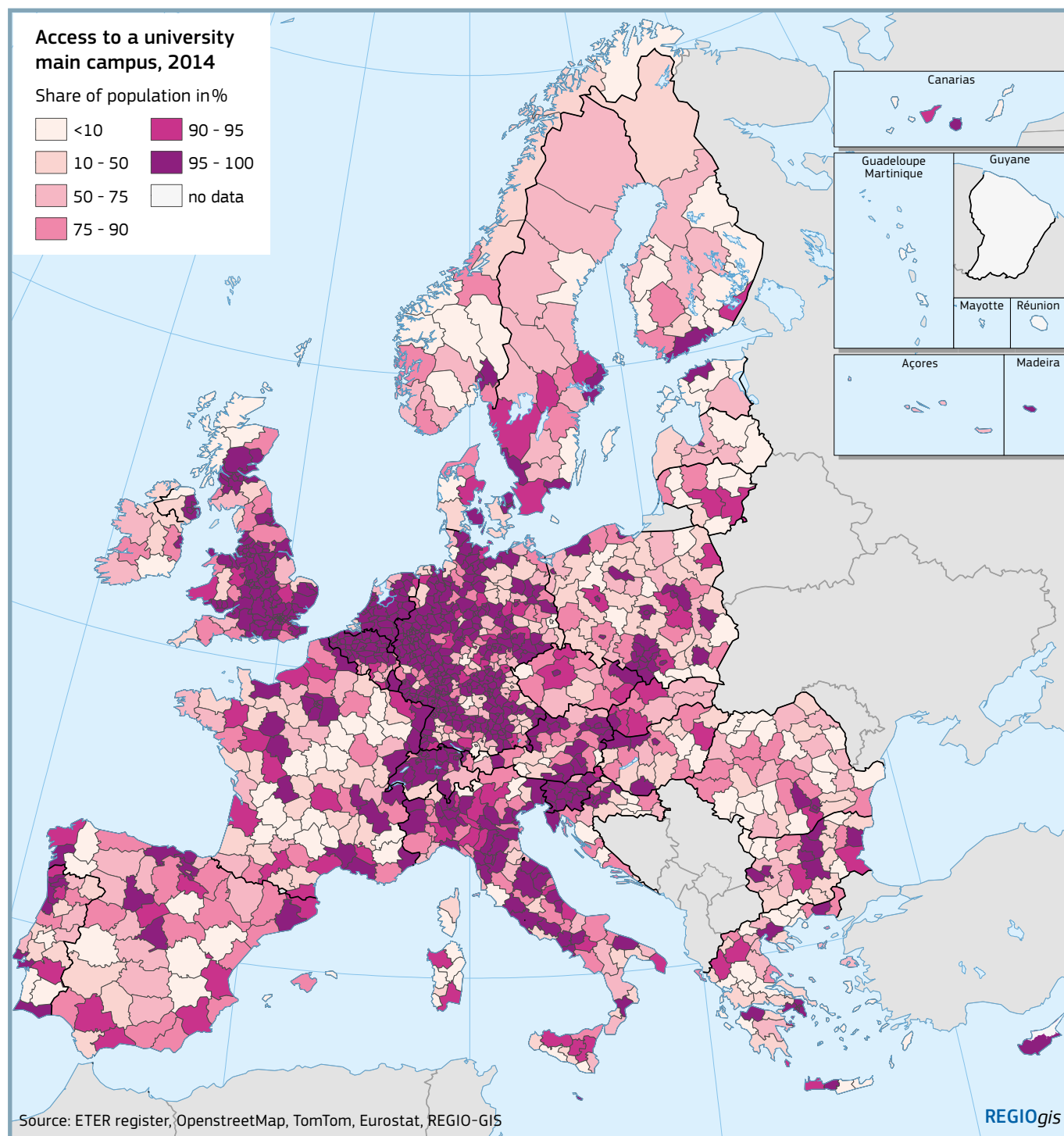
Looking at the next ESIF funding period 2021-2027, how do you see Cohesion Policy priorities and delivery mechanisms evolving in Lithuania?

We have to continue investments in human capital – education and skills, innovation and R&D, health, collaboration between business and research sectors and other areas – in order to achieve inclusive growth for our country and to catch up with the EU average. Cohesion Policy with adequate financial allocations and a co-financing obligation that reflects the economic reality of a country is crucial to achieve these goals. It is necessary to further enhance results-orientation, flexibility, proportionality and the simplification of Cohesion Policy. ■

Accessibility to universities varies across regions and territories

Convenient access to higher education can be an important asset for regional development and attractiveness. In general, universities are widespread throughout the European territory. Based on the criterion of a maximum of 45 minutes by car, 82% of the EU+EFTA (European Free Trade Association) population live close to the main site of one or more universities.

Nevertheless, more than 22% of NUTS-3 regions, representing 14% of the population, have a relatively low access to universities (less than half of their population).



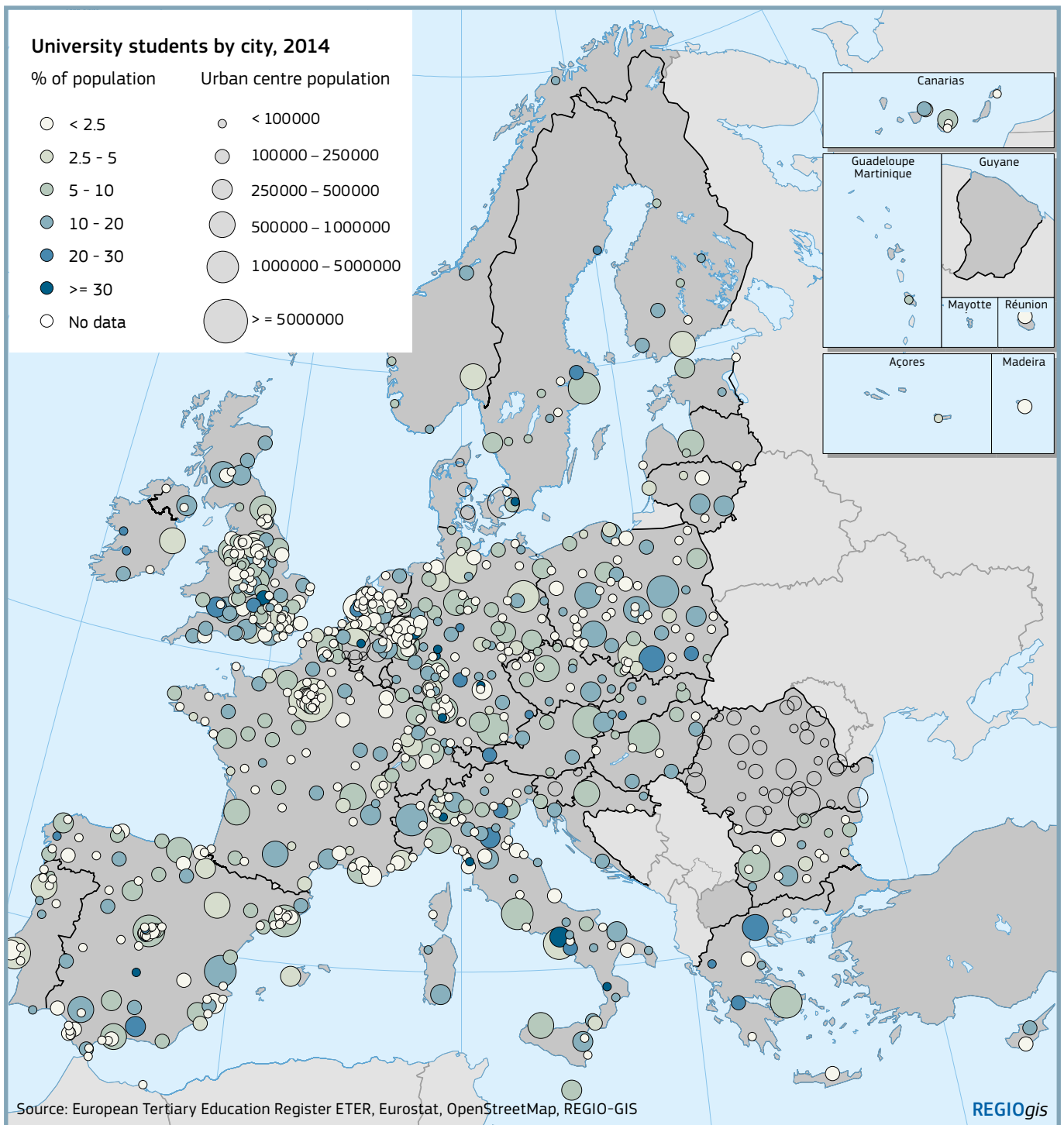
University students by city, 2014

Universities can also play an important role in the social and economic functions provided by cities. On average, students enrolled at universities in cities represent more than 6% of the city's population. Higher shares are found in particular in medium-sized cities (between 250000 and 1 million inhabitants). In 38 cities, the number of university students divided by the cities' population exceeds 20%. Many of these cities – such as Bologna (ES), Oxford (UK), Krakow (PL) and Leuven (BE) – have hosted universities for several centuries.

This analysis combines data from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER) with the spatial distribution of population at the level of 1 km² grid cells and with estimated driving times over the complete road network.

FIND OUT MORE

ETER: <https://www.eter-project.com>



CAPTURED ON CAMERA IN RHINELAND-PALATINATE

Thanks to the ERDF, within the 2014-2020 framework, the Rhineland-Palatinate helps projects on the ground with research and development funding, support for SMEs, as well as measures to improve climate protection and cross-border projects. The ERDF is an important pillar of Rhineland-Palatinate's promotion of the regional economy, including innovation, enabling companies, municipalities, research facilities and citizens to benefit from EU Cohesion Policy.



01



04



05



02



06



03



07



01 The Dr. Boy company has developed a modular indexing tool enabling both injection moulded parts and various hollow bodies to be produced universally.

02 In the Eifel district of Bitburg-Prüm, 14 hiking routes have been signposted covering over 220 kilometres of rocky landscapes, dense forests and flowering meadows.



09

03 Effective solutions for Industry 4.0-compatible welding have been developed by the EWM company, helping it to create jobs and increase sales.

04 Fischer has produced a system to reduce energy and fresh water consumption and use dissipated heat for heating circuits, saving over 80 tonnes of CO₂ annually.

05 Gründungsbüros has developed and set up joint funding offices for universities in Kaiserslautern, Koblenz, Landau, Mainz and Trier.



10

06 A new medical radiotherapy device, developed by iRT Systems GmbH, can check the prescribed dose distribution for a patient in 'real time' during radiation.

07 Schreinerei Gerlach has developed the CNC machining centre (computerised numerical control) to boost competitiveness and create a permanent workplace.

08 SD Blechtechnologie has invested in its production site and increased energy efficiency, saving a minimum of 40 tonnes of CO₂ per year.



11

09 The Wanderwunder Moselsteig Weinbergspfad project has built a 365-kilometre route along the Moselle from Perl to Koblenz connecting cultural and rural sites.

10 In Robotix, cross-border cooperation is creating synergies in teaching and research on robotics, establishing a permanent research cluster for industrial robotics.

11 SESAM partners from Lorraine, Saarland, Luxembourg, Rhineland-Palatinate and Belgium are creating opportunities to acquire key competences in a cross-border labour market.



12

12 The SeRaMCO project is carrying out an analysis of the chemistry of recycled aggregates in the production of strong, durable and stable concrete.

FIND OUT MORE

ERDF Rhineland-Palatinate: www.efre.rlp.de

Interreg: <https://mwvwlw.rlp.de/de/themen/wirtschafts-und-innovationspolitik/interreg/>

DATA POINT

Figuring out implementation of the 2007–2013 ERDF and CF allocations

At the end of summer 2018, the Commission published the up-to-date financial picture of the 2007-2013 implementation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) allocations.

Despite the challenges faced by the European Union during the 2007-2013 programming period, the financial implementation of ERDF and CF allocations stands at 97.7% at the end of summer 2018, with the closure process at cruising speed.

EUR 270.9 billion was made available to Member States (MS) at the beginning of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2007-2013 through the ERDF and CF, to co-finance projects with high added value in reducing imbalances between the EU regions. This significant envelope was channelled via two main objectives: convergence, and regional competitiveness and employment. A third objective was put in place to enhance cross-border cooperation (CB) between MS.

How much was paid and how much was lost?

Advance payments amounting to EUR 23.9 billion were made in the first three years of the budgetary cycle to ensure programmes could start without being delayed by cash constraints. Furthermore, reimbursement by the Commission for claims received between 1 January 2007 and 31 March 2017 (2018 for the new MS: Croatia) totalled EUR 231 billion, subject to a 95% threshold (except for Greece) which restricted the remaining 5% of the allocation for treatment at closure.

This buffer protects the interests of EU taxpayers by ensuring that any irregular amounts disbursed to the MS are duly recovered. From this restricted 5% (or more where MS did not claim reimbursements up to the threshold), an amount of EUR 6.1 billion was paid to 19 MS+CB by the end of summer 2018, and EUR 2.6 billion de-committed (lost) for 14 MS+CB with regard to programmes that were already closed or pre-closed.

This loss was due to failure of the MS to claim the remaining 5% in their final claim, or irregularities detected by Commission auditors. Where the 5% buffer did not cover the irregular amounts paid, additional recoveries of EUR 12.3 million were made at the end of the summer with regard to two MS+CB.

Implementation of ERDF and CF allocations by type of transaction

EUR million	CF	ERDF	Grand total
Initial allocation	70.075,0	200.822,2	270.897,2
Pre-financing	7.478,9	16.413,4	23.892,3
Interim payments	58.730,0	172.221,9	230.951,9
Closure payments	2.204,6	3.926,4	6.131,0
De-commitments (n+2/n+3)	209,7	809,0	1.018,6
De-commitments at closure	790,1	1.786,7	2.576,9
Recoveries at closure (31/08/2018)	-	12,3	12,3
Allocation still open (31/08/2018)	661,6	5.664,8	6.326,4

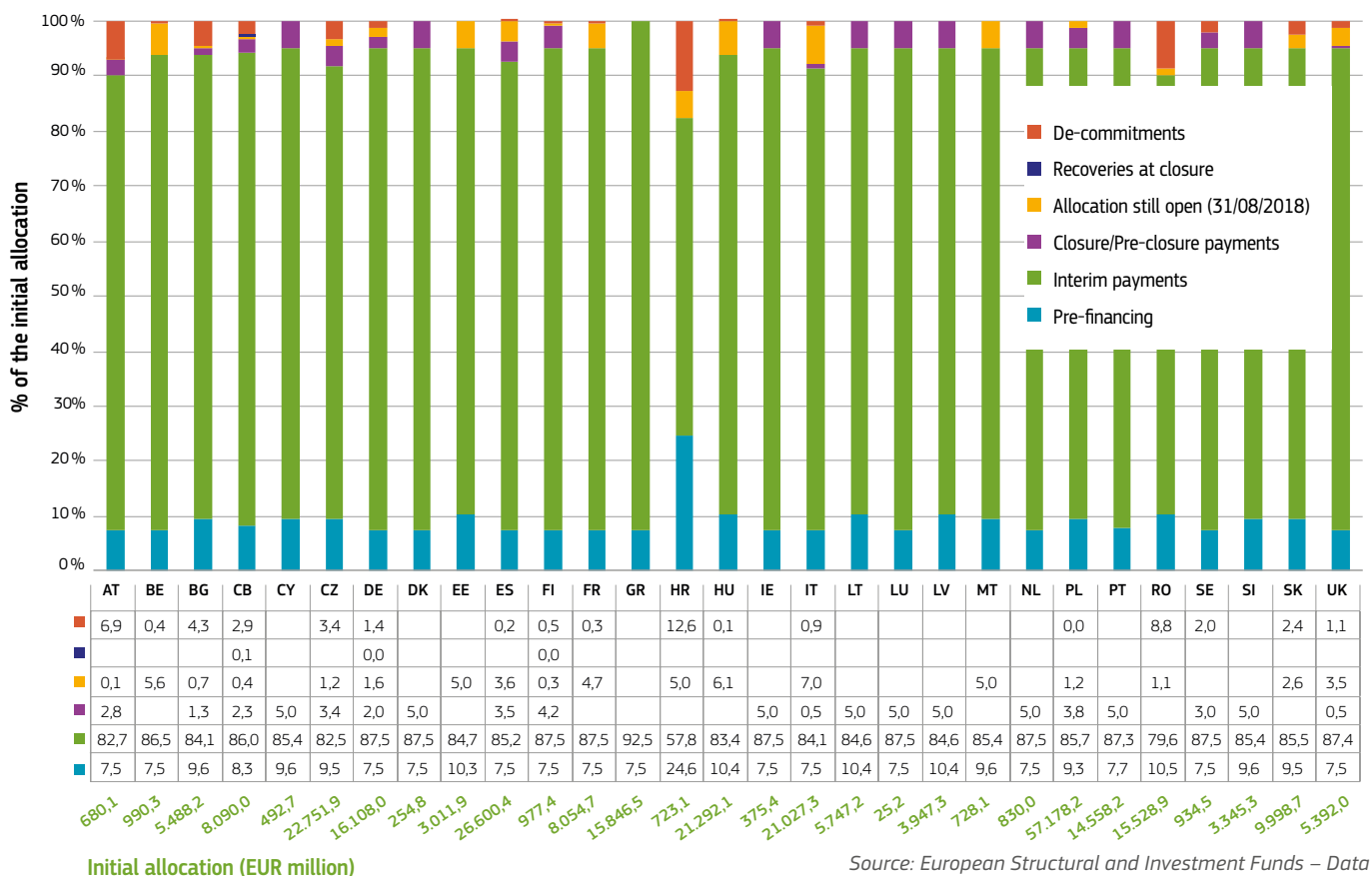
Given the expected scale of investments and emphasis on delivering effective results, the Commission ensured financial discipline and incentivised faster budgetary implementation through the 'n+2/n+3' de-commitment rule. According to this rule, the deadline for consumption of a yearly commitment 'n' was 31 December of the second year, except for the MS whose GDP from 2001 to 2003 was below 85 % of the EU-25 average, for which the deadline was 31 December of the third year.

To counteract the impact of the financial crisis, the Commission allowed relief on the 2007 commitment from the above rule by splitting it in six and adding one-sixth of the 2007

budget commitment to each of the 2008 to 2013 budget commitments. Further flexibility was shown by paying a top-up of 10 % on reimbursed claims to the MS most affected by the financial crisis, allowing phasing of projects between multiannual financial periods and amendments of programmes to adapt to the new challenges without affecting the policy objectives. Nevertheless, 12 MS+CB lost EUR 1 billion under the 'n+2/n+3' de-commitments rule.

A global picture is provided below, by MS and type of transaction, with the full amounts available on the ESIF Open Data Platform: <http://europa.eu/!Pv48jv>

Implementation of ERDF and CF allocations by type of transaction and Member State



Source: European Structural and Investment Funds – Data

Do you have an issue you would like discussed in future Panorama DATA POINT features?

Is there a financial dataset you would like us to put on the ESIF Open Data Platform?

If so, please e-mail: REGIO-A3-BUDGET-TEAM@ec.europa.eu



Interregional cooperation works!

In early 2018, Interreg Europe decided to look into the policy changes and effects interregional cooperation projects bring. Ample evidence of the benefits has been published in a recent report.

Working with partners is beneficial – even more so when they share possible solutions and good practices. Solutions tested in one part of Europe can turn into accelerators of change in other regions involved in interregional cooperation projects.

Interreg Europe is a pan-European programme for interregional cooperation, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. In Interreg Europe projects, public and private non-profit organisations from all over Europe work together on regional development policies.

Their cooperation is ‘soft’. They share experience and good practices with project partners and policy-relevant stakeholders, seeking solutions to regional challenges together.

Given the time needed for results to materialise, the evidence was sourced from the programme’s predecessor, INTERREG IVC, which co-financed interregional cooperation projects from 2008-2014.

A survey among the partners and interviews with a selected group provided evidence of soft cooperation that turned into real change. Twenty stories featured in the report show how inspiration shared among the projects can bring about changes and improvements.

Examples of beneficial cooperation

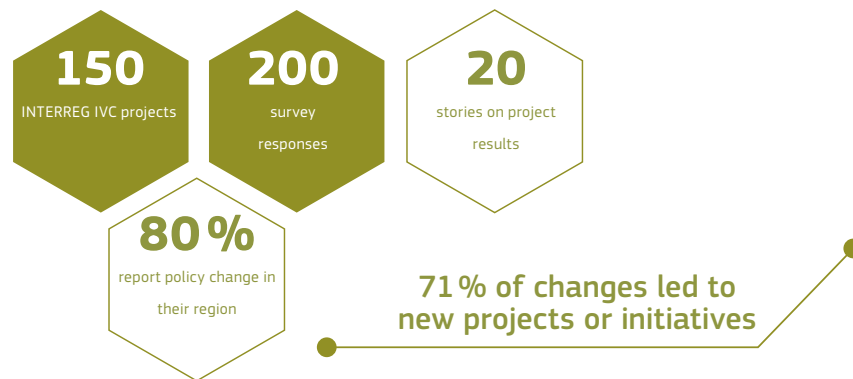
The **PROSESC** project helped an incubation support centre in the county of Norfolk, UK, develop its vision on innovation, transfer good practice in supply-chain innovation support from Germany, and become the county’s innovation hub.

In **FIN-EN**, the Italian Lombardy Region’s financial institution developed a new set of financial instruments and IT system for their application, reporting and monitoring, thanks to good practice transferred from the UK.

“ *Without Hybrid Parks there would not have been designs for these gardens. Designing green spaces was not normally done in Malta. Hybrid Parks was the push to get the expertise.* ”

Malcolm Borg, Heritage Enterprise, Hybrid Parks

EFFECTS OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION



Through the **MOG** project, Hungary's Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency developed a mobility scheme connecting people, goods and services from rural areas to the surrounding cities. This good practice transferred from Germany helped to reduce the region's rural depopulation and environmental pollution.

In **VITOUR LANDSCAPE**, good practices from Italy and Austria helped the World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association in Germany develop activities and initiatives for better landscape heritage protection and preservation. ■

“ *The good practice was the initiator of the brand, a catalyst, showing that it was possible. People from Austria explained face to face how it can work. Without the exchange we would not be as far.* ”

Nico Melchior, World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association, VITOUR LANDSCAPE



FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.interregeurope.eu/projectresults>

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE ... AND SUCCESS

- › In Romania, clusters use a new support scheme to improve their management, built around good practices from partners from France, Austria and Hungary (CLUSTERIX);
- › Linz in Austria has a new co-working space for cultural and creative industries inspired by good practice from Finland (CREA.RE);
- › Oakenshaw, UK, supported the construction of a windmill to provide the community with revenue for other energy-efficient projects, thanks to the experience shared by the Danish partner (REENERGY);
- › Linköping in Sweden developed an urban gardening and outdoor learning approach to boost social cohesion in their community, with the help of an Italian partner (Hybrid Parks).



PROJECTS

ECOWAVE WINS 2018 ENERGY GLOBE AWARD FOR GIBRALTAR

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 224 497**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 67 349**

The Wave Energy Power Station project has capitalised on its marine location on the Rock of Gibraltar, a British Overseas Territory, to generate and supply electricity to the local grid. Besides contributing to the commercialisation of wave energy worldwide, the project has also created job opportunities for several local industries.

The Energy Globe Award is presented to projects that either conserve and protect our environment and resources or focus on renewable energy and sustainable best practice. With funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the ECOWAVE pilot project has demonstrated that wave energy is an efficient and economical solution for locations that are too small to accommodate solar panels and wind power stations.

The ECOWAVE plant was installed at a former World War II ammunition jetty on the Rock of Gibraltar. Robust 'arms' attach uniquely shaped floaters to the jetty: as the floaters rise and fall with the wave motion, biodegradable fluid is transmitted to an onshore power station where it is converted into fluid pressure. This spins a generator to produce clean electricity and transmit it to Gibraltar's grid.

Commercial connections

In another first for the project, the wave energy pilot plant was successfully connected to Gibraltar's grid without creating any fluctuations in supply or damage. Having overcome several barriers to commercialisation in the wave energy industry, ECOWAVE put its innovative technology and onshore location to good use to develop a renewable energy power plant at a significantly lower cost than previous attempts in the wave energy field.

The pilot project has also reduced the effects of extreme weather conditions at sea by building most of the power plant on land where it is easier to access and maintain. The system can also respond to real-time data from the floaters – and when the height of the waves is too extreme for the system to handle, it automatically lifts the floaters above the water level before recommencing operations once the storm has passed.

Green power

Significant energy was also invested in ensuring that ECOWAVE respected the region's environmental and tourism requirements. Installed in an unused breakwater, the power plant does not pose any navigation risks to ships, is less visible from the shoreline and prime beachfront sites, and there is no noise pollution.

The system causes no disruption to the local marine life because it floats on the surface and is only connected to the jetty (which is a man-made structure) and not to the sea floor. Furthermore, the biodegradable hydraulic fluid used at the plant is pollution free.

Gibraltar's tourism and trade has also benefitted from the regeneration of the previously closed jetty, which is now open to visitors.

Having already registered 13 new patents and exceeded the world record for grid-connection hours accrued, the Eco Wave Power company is now planning a 5-megawatt onshore wave power station which will provide the British Overseas Territory with 15% of its electricity. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.ecowavepower.com/>

PROJECTS

HAMBURG'S RENEWABLE 'ENERGY HILL' BROADENS HORIZONS

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 9 140 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 4 435 703**

A former landfill mound has been transformed into a new landmark for Hamburg. The Georgswerder Energy Hill provides the German city's residents and visitors with renewable energy, an information centre and green space.

The International Building Exhibition in Hamburg has devised and implemented numerous projects for sustainable, environmentally friendly and socially balanced development of inner city areas. This included a competition to redevelop a former landfill site in the district of Georgswerder, on Europe's largest river island in the Elbe. The project was completed in 2013 using the winning design.

From toxic mound to renewable energy symbol

For decades, household and toxic industrial waste had been dumped in the Georgswerder landfill. By the late 1970s, the landfill operation had been discontinued but dioxins were found to be leaking into the groundwater. The 40-metre-high mound and the subsoil had to be extensively secured with a waterproof plastic membrane. Technical work was undertaken over a number of years to secure the site and protect the groundwater.

The site was then covered with soil and is now a green hill with meadows and shrubs. Taking advantage of the excellent wind conditions, the first wind turbines were erected on the hill in the 1990s. Today, high-performance wind turbines and solar energy panels supply thousands of households with electricity.

The Energy Hill has been open to the public since 2013. Those keen to know more can visit an information centre with interactive, multimedia displays to find out about the site's history and how it was transformed.

Visitors can also learn about modern waste management, recycling methods and more – particularly as the building allows for a close-up view of the technical equipment and installations for groundwater treatment and renewable energy. The centre is energy-efficient.

The Energy Hill adds to the green spaces in the Georgswerder district. People can climb the hill and walk around a curved boardwalk at the top to enjoy the fresh air and impressive views over the harbour and city centre. The path provides a contemporary space for different activities.

This 'Horizon Path' is designed to appear as a white ring circling the hill that can be seen from far away – a landmark for Hamburg. At night, it is illuminated with LED lighting. The loop is built from recyclable materials, while its never-ending shape symbolises the importance of recycling and the circular economy. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.facebook.com/energieberggeorgswerder/>



PROJECTS

CUTTING-EDGE LASER, NUCLEAR PHYSICS FACILITY TO OPEN IN ROMANIA

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 310 946 691**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 255 933 558**

A state-of-the-art facility for research into photonuclear physics and its applications using laser technologies is set to become operational in the Romanian town of Măgurele in 2019.

Established by the Extreme Light Infrastructure-Nuclear Physics project (ELI-NP), it is part of a wider European undertaking that also includes facilities in Hungary (ELI Attosecond Light Pulse Source) and the Czech Republic (ELI-Beamlines).

Equipment for the two arms of the facility's high-power laser system has been installed, and testing for three laser beams – which have potential power output levels of 100 terawatts, 1 petawatt and 10 petawatts – has begun. Construction of a laser beam transport system is also under way.

Commercial connections

Some of the laboratories at the facility, such as those for optics and experimental target production, are already operational. The target laboratory has a range of equipment for producing micro- and nano-scale structures – including a system for fabrication of nanostructures on solid targets for improved absorption of laser pulses – and is being continually upgraded.

Researchers from this laboratory have started preparing targets for initial experiments with the high-power lasers. The laboratory is also involved in master- and doctoral-level educational programmes in the field of micro and nanotechnologies.

Installation of the facility's gamma beam system and construction of instruments for gamma beam experiments are also going ahead, with some of the instruments ready for use. A main priority in this area is to set up experiments for the low- and high-energy gamma beams. ELI-NP researchers are working with an international scientific committee on this and have conducted a successful preparatory experiment at Duke University in the USA. These studies will continue at ELI-NP.

Experiments in nuclear resonance fluorescence (NRF) – a process in which a nucleus absorbs and emits gamma rays – are a specific research niche for the facility. Its equipment will be able to detect gamma rays efficiently in the presence of high radiation, and the NRF technique will be used for precision 3D radiography and tomography that make it possible to view the internal form or cross-sections of objects. This is an attractive technique for the non-destructive analysis of a wide variety of materials.

A device known as a silicon strip array is also being developed to measure reactions relevant to astronomical events such as the Big Bang or supernova explosions.

More than 150 researchers from 26 countries are now working at ELI-NP and international-level recruitment is ongoing with a view to reaching 300 employees by 2020. An open access scheme will make the new facility available to people from the other ELI pillars, as well as to external scientific users. ■

FIND OUT MORE

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

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18-19 OCTOBER

Sofia (BG)

7th Annual EUSDR Forum

19 OCTOBER

Brussels (BE)

Cohesion Policy post-2020 and sustainability transitions

20-21 NOVEMBER

Innsbruck (AT)

2nd Annual EUSALP Forum

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

Print: ISSN 1608-389X

PDF: ISSN 1725-8308

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Printed in Belgium

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The content of this issue was finalised September 2018.

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