



European  
Commission

# PANORAMA

*Focusing on European Regional and Urban Policy*

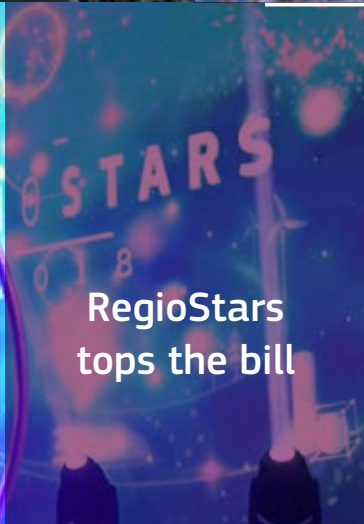
WINTER 2018 / No. 67



Rhineland-Palatinate:  
cross-border support



Linking urban  
challenges with  
solutions



RegioStars  
tops the bill



Cultural  
heritage:  
widening  
horizons

Regional and  
Urban Policy

# PANORAMA

## In this issue ...

The winter issue of *Panorama* magazine, which is now available to download, covers a wide range of topics from urban issues to culture and industrial transition.

We open with a report from the Austrian Presidency on how their team has prepared negotiations in the Council on the legislative package 2021-2027. Our interview is a joint exchange with both Minister-President Malu Dreyer and Economics Minister Dr Volker Wissing from the Rhineland-Palatinate. We also explore what EU funds have done for the European Year of Cultural Heritage, how they are helping regions undergoing industrial transition, and profile some of the projects supported through the Urban Innovative Actions programme.

In our 'In Your Own Words' section we hear from Castilla-La-Mancha, Finland and South Poland, and from younger

people via their experiences with the Interreg Volunteer Youth programme and the Youth4Regions media programme.

We chat to this year's RegioStars winners, look back at some images from the 2018 European Week of Regions and Cities, and feature some highlights from the recently published Eurostat 2018 Regional Yearbook. The projects section visits Poland, Denmark, Slovakia, Italy and Greece.

Happy reading!



AGNÈS MONFRET

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



12



14



24



38

|  |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|
| EDITORIAL.....   | 03 | NEWS IN BRIEF.....  | 35 |
| AUSTRIAN PRESIDENCY: GETTING THE JOB DONE.....                           | 04 | MAPS: MEASURING GENDER EQUALITY.....                          | 36 |
| COMMITTING TO THE OUTERMOST REGIONS.....                                 | 07 | TERRITORIAL COOPERATION ON CULTURE HERITAGE.....              | 38 |
| INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR URBAN CHALLENGES.....                           | 08 | EU FUNDING CRUCIAL FOR POLAND'S PROGRESS.....                 | 42 |
| INTERVIEW: MALU DREYER AND VOLKER WISSING FROM RHINELAND-PALATINATE..... | 12 | COHESION POLICY: FINLAND REFLECTS.....                        | 43 |
| HELPING COAL-PRODUCING REGIONS IN TRANSITION.....                        | 14 | CASTILLA-LA MANCHA WANTS MORE AND BETTER COHESION.....        | 44 |
| FOCUS ON TERRITORIES WITH GEOGRAPHICAL SPECIFICITIES.....                | 18 | INTERREG EUROPE CYBER PROJECT.....                            | 45 |
| CAPTURED ON CAMERA: EWRC.....  | 20 | EUROPE'S REGIONS IN STATISTICS.....                           | 46 |
| TOP OF THE EWRC MASTER CLASS.....  | 22 | FIGHTING FUNDING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION.....                    | 50 |
| SPOTLIGHT ON REGIOSTARS WINNERS.....                                     | 24 | DATA POINT: FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS.....                        | 52 |
| YOUNG JOURNALISTS HAVE THEIR SAY.....                                    | 28 | DANUBE STURGEON STRATEGY.....                                 | 54 |
| INTERREG VOLUNTEER YOUTH.....  | 32 | PROJECTS FROM DENMARK, ITALY/GREECE, SLOVAKIA AND POLAND..... | 55 |
| PITCHING IN FOR EUSALP.....  | 34 |   |    |

## EDITORIAL

Two months ago, in the previous issue of *Panorama*, I encouraged you to take the opportunity of the European Week of Regions and Cities to contribute to the current reflection that is laying the foundations for Cohesion Policy in the next decade. What we did not know at the time is that this Week would turn out to be the largest-ever gathering of Cohesion Policy practitioners. Over 7 000 partners came together at the Square in Brussels to participate in the event which was opened by President Juncker.

This great success is not only a good omen for the future of our policy. It is also proof of its vitality and ability to deliver a better, fairer and stronger Europe, thanks to the involvement of thousands of committed people throughout the Union. With the European elections just a few months away, it is crucial that we are vocal about all that we have achieved together for the regions and for the citizens.

First, by striving to ensure that no region and nobody is left behind, Cohesion Policy has stayed true to its roots. Examples such as the Catching-Up Regions initiative, or the work done to facilitate the integration of migrants, are certainly key milestones in this regard. Not to mention the tremendous support from the EU Solidarity Fund to regions hit by natural disasters, or our continued efforts to overcome obstacles to cross-border life and work.

Moreover, we have intensified our support for EU regions in industrial transition, identifying their competitive advantages, and supporting SMEs on their way towards a carbon-free economy. For instance, our recent initiative for coal regions

in transition has helped over 40 regions in 12 different Member States find new growth opportunities. By supporting economic diversification, and championing close to 120 smart specialisation strategies on the ground, Cohesion Policy has become a decisive catalyst for resilience, competitiveness and greater socio-economic convergence between regions.

Finally, we have engaged like never before in a continuous effort to do better and in a simpler way, in line with my commitment when taking office. We have worked hard to measure and increase the impact of our policy, notably through the launch of a comprehensive Open Data platform, or by joining forces with the Juncker Investment Plan. We have also empowered the High-level Group on Simplification to table meaningful simplifying proposals, which fed into the Omnibus regulation and our reflection on the future of Cohesion Policy.

We can only be proud of all these achievements! Thanks to your ongoing support, I am confident that there will be many more and that our actions will continue to embody the very essence of Cohesion Policy: improving the daily life of European citizens. ■



**Corina Crețu**

*European Commissioner for Regional Policy*





# ‘Less is more!’

General Affairs Council (Cohesion) meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## An interview with the Austrian EU Presidency team on the state of negotiations in the Council, on their approach to simplification – and on four-legged support

On 31 December, the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU will come to an end. With the Commission proposals for Cohesion Policy post-2020 published only a month before the start of the Presidency, Austria and its negotiators played a central role in setting the scene for discussions in the Council. *Panorama* talked to their Brussels-based team, Johannes Rossbacher, Alexander Ferstl and Christoph Klemencic.

### *Where do you stand with the legislative package for 2021-2027?*

**Johannes Rossbacher:** We are very well on track, I must say. We are close to reaching an agreement on key chapters of the common provisions regulation. And the ERDF regulation is nearly finished on the Council’s side. With five legislative proposals on the table, our Council working party did its best to make fast and far-reaching progress.

### *What was your approach for the negotiations?*

**Alexander Ferstl:** To start with, we were convinced that the Commission proposals are reasonable and a real step forward in terms of simplification. With this in mind, we tried to limit changes to the proposed legal text. We believe that not everything needs to be regulated – and in that sense, less is more!

### *And did you succeed?*

**Christoph Klemencic:** Yes, I think so. We kept the simplification elements which the Commission proposed – and went even further. Let’s take the example of the partnership agreement. Why should a Member State with a small budgetary allocation or only one multi-funds programme need to go the extra mile to write such a document? Our proposal to skip this extra step in certain cases was also agreed by ministers at the Council on 30 November.

### *Is there an agreement on the budget?*

**JR:** Discussions on the multiannual financial framework will be concluded at the highest level. We worked – and are working – on getting the implementation modalities right. We prioritised those elements in the regulations which our programme authorities in the regions need for



“ Our role as  
Presidency was to be  
an independent  
broker and to build  
bridges. ”

their future programmes. So, once the decision on the finances has been taken, we can easily create links.

*So, what are these elements?*

**AF:** Everything concerning audit and control, programming and planning, as well as conditionalities and performance. I know this doesn't sound too sexy, but managing authorities need to know what to expect – and to start setting up their implementation structures for future programmes. With this strat-

egy, we hope to gain precious time and ensure a rapid start for the programmes. Things should start moving in 2021, not in 2022 or 2023.

*Looking back over the past six months, what were the key challenges in the negotiations?*

**CK:** I would say that we had to find compromises between all sorts of fractions: the net-payers and the net-receivers, the different approaches in the west, east, south and north – and sometimes very different opinions regardless of these two aspects. Our role as the Presidency was to be an independent broker and to build bridges. Then again, this didn't mean that we always made everybody happy at all times.

**JR:** Striking a compromise is never easy. You probably know that you have a good compromise on your hands

when everybody around the table is a bit happy and a bit unhappy at the same time.

*What's next in the negotiations?*

**AF:** In January, our colleagues from Romania will take over and continue with the high pace we set. With one to two working party meetings per week and a pretty similar approach, you can expect further, fast progress in the coming months. After an agreement in the Council, the triologue phase will start. I am convinced that the Council, Commission and Parliament are not that far apart in their views.

*On a more personal note, how was the Presidency work?*

**JR:** This was my third Austrian Presidency, so I knew what to expect: long hours, meetings on Sundays and very

*Joint forces for Cohesion Policy: informal meeting of the Council working party for Structural Measures in Austria (Burgenland), September 2018*



“ We kept the simplification elements which the Commission proposed – and went even further. ”



Paul Unglaub, Johannes Rossbacher, Alexander Ferstl (with Elvira), Christoph Klemencic

intense teamwork. And honestly, we could not have managed without wonderful support from Vienna, great colleagues in the Council secretariat, our ‘all-rounder’ Paul – and additional help from Alexander’s dog!

#### *A Presidency dog?*

**AF:** Yes, my dog was with us most of the time. Elvira – that’s her name – kept up spirits and always managed to take our minds off the regulations for a few moments. This clearly helped during such a challenging period.

**JR:** Funnily enough, I was afraid of dogs before, but this has changed things completely. I will even miss Elvira’s ‘support’ – a full team member!

#### *You seem to have had fun!*

**CK:** Oh, absolutely! My highlight: on one occasion, a Council colleague didn’t understand our chair’s name well – and then called him ‘your highness’ instead of ‘Jo-hannes’. Very presidential, I must say.

**AF:** Not forgetting our Croatian colleagues who got into yodelling! We organised a short training session during our opening reception – and they still know how to do it! Pretty impressive...

**JR:** Fun certainly helps with a mammoth task like an EU Presidency, that’s for sure! ■





*Pictured at the Conference of Presidents of the EU's Outermost Regions 2018. Front row, left to right: Ramón Luis Valcárcel, Ignacio Sánchez Amor, Fernando Clavijo, King Felipe VI, Corina Crețu, Ana Paula Zacarias, Daniel Gibbs; back row, left to right: Claude Plenet, Marie-Luce Plenchar, Alfred Marie-Jeanne, Vasco Cordeiro, Miguel Machado de Albuquerque, Yolaine Costes, Mohammed Sidi*

## Concrete commitment to the outermost regions

**On the occasion of the annual conference of the outermost regions, one year after the launch of the new EU strategy dedicated to them, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu shows how the EU has held its commitments to support these regions.**

There are no less than 21 proposals under the next EU budget which take into account the specificities of outermost regions – the translation into concrete opportunities of the special attention paid by the Juncker Commission to these regions. For instance, it has been proposed that the regions continue to benefit from specific additional funding and from the highest rate of European co-financing. In addition, given their unique geographical situation, it is proposed that they can invest EU funds in airports; and a specific Inter-reg strand has been created for these regions, with a dedicated budget, to encourage cooperation between neighbours.

New rules have just been adopted on state aid to help fishermen in the outermost regions buy new vessels, with a higher level of aid for small vessels, and under some conditions, to ensure sustainable fisheries.

New avenues for growth have also been opened by supporting research and innovation. For example, the Commission has launched the FORWARD project with EUR 4.3 million from Horizon 2020 through which 24 partners from the nine regions will analyse their innovation systems and mobilise local actors, including industry, around strategies based on their specific strengths. They will also ensure closer links between their regions and European or international innovation networks to increase their participation in the future Horizon Europe research programme.

The Commission is also working together with outermost regions and their Member States to devise tailor-made solutions for their specific challenges. After a first successful experience on the Island of Reunion on energy transition, the Commission has launched a second task force to improve waste management and promote the circular economy in the Canary Islands. All parties concerned will work together to take up this major challenge to improve the quality of life in the archipelago.

The place of the outermost regions in future programmes as well as these initiatives complements the direct and constant dialogue between the Juncker Commission and these nine regions. They are the symbol of an ever-closer partnership at all levels. ■

## URBAN STORIES



# Urban Innovative Actions: testing innovative solutions and measuring results

Urban Innovative Actions provide EU cities with resources to finance innovative projects, with a total envelope of EUR 372 million from the European Regional Development Fund for the period 2014-2020. The aim is to identify, test and disseminate concrete solutions to common urban challenges.

To date, 55 projects from across the EU have been selected during three calls launched in 2015, 2016, and 2017; a fourth call is ongoing. Cities can apply online until the end of January 2019 (see details below). A fifth and final call will be launched by the end of 2019. <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/call-proposals>

Each project has three years to implement their innovative solutions and measure the results. The fourth year is dedicated to disseminating the lessons learnt. Important lessons can also come from failure. In fact, these projects aim to test innovative solutions which means they carry a risk of not achieving the expected results.

The calls concern the societal challenges identified in the Urban Agenda for the EU (see article in *Panorama 66*). They cover social issues like the integration of migrants, and poverty, as well as environmental issues like the circular economy, climate change, and economic issues such as employment and digitalisation.

Within a topic, project promoters often build an innovative solution combining socio-economic and environmental components in an integrated approach, which is characteristic of UIA projects together with a bottom-up approach. In the end, solutions are the result of co-designing with local stakeholders.

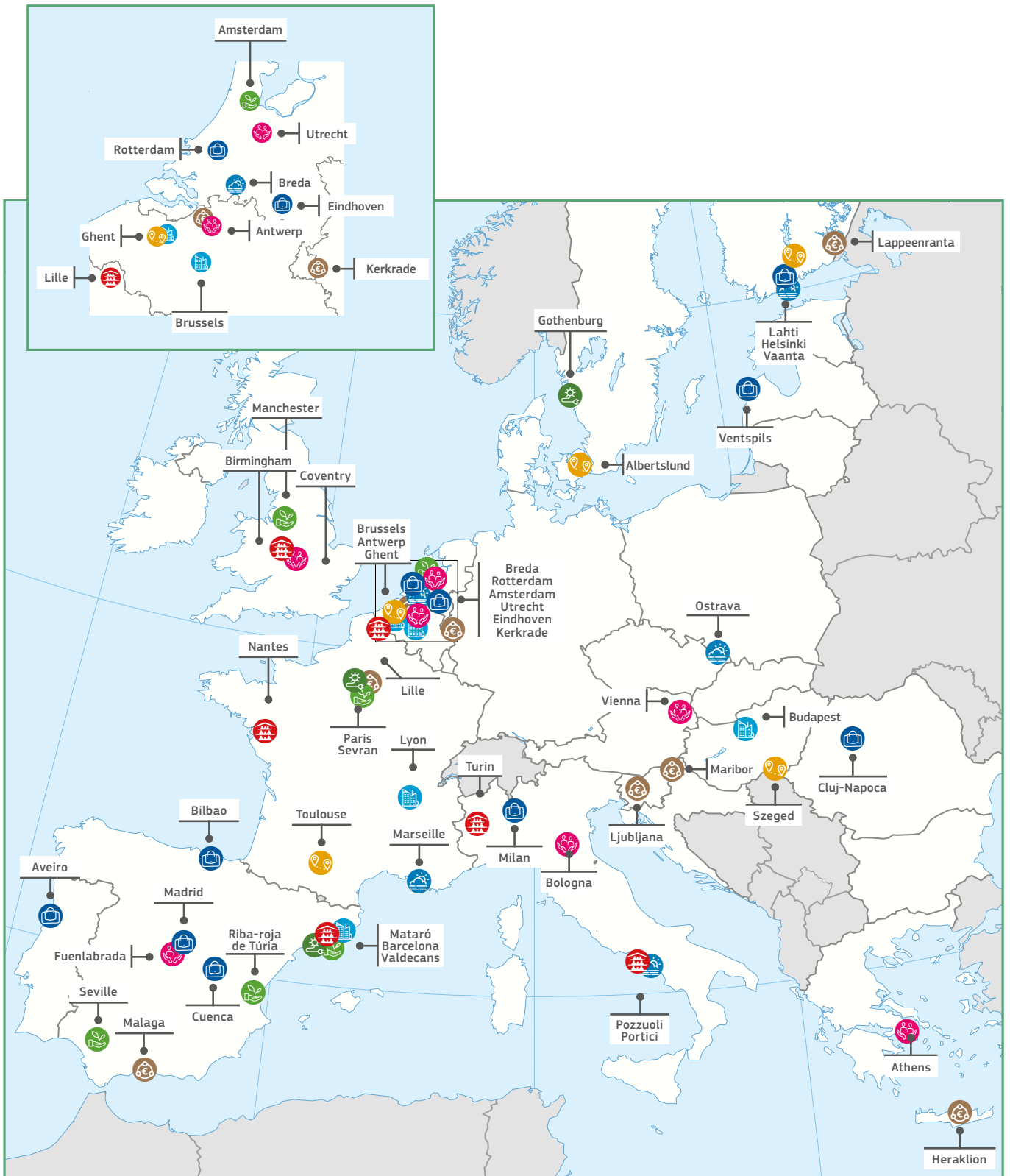
- › 1<sup>st</sup> call launched in 2015: 17 projects selected
- › 2<sup>nd</sup> call launched in 2016: 16 projects selected
- › 3<sup>rd</sup> call launched in 2017: 22 projects selected
- › 4<sup>th</sup> call open online until end of January 2019
- › 5<sup>th</sup> call will be launched in September 2019

For the next programming period 2021-2027, the Commission would like to foster the link between urban challenges, innovation and the know-how gap among local actors. It then proposes to set up the European Urban Initiative which will integrate and develop new activities on the basis of existing initiatives, such as UIA, Urbact and the Urban Agenda for the EU. ■

### FIND OUT MORE



<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en>





© EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries

### Urban Innovative Actions: approved projects

-  Adaptation to climate change
-  Air quality
-  Circular economy
-  Energy transition
-  Housing
-  Integration of migrants and refugees
-  Jobs and skills in the local economy
-  Urban mobility
-  Urban poverty





## Antwerp (BE), Integration of migrants and refugees

*“With this initiative, we want to ensure that young refugees have the opportunity to rebuild their lives in Antwerp. Our first priority is the integration of these youngsters who, like all youngsters, deserve that extra helping hand. CURANT combines human compassion and social responsibility. We hope Antwerp can be a leading example for other cities.”*

Fons Duchateau, Chairman, Social Welfare Department, Antwerp



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
02/2017 – 10/2019

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 4894 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/antwerp>



## Bilbao (ES), Jobs and skills in the local economy

*“We believe that investing in knowledge is investing in the future, and that entrepreneurs are called to be the builders of the economy of tomorrow. UIA-AS-Fabrik musters all of our strengths and represents the spearhead of the future economy of Bilbao.”*

Juan Mari Aburto, Mayor of Bilbao



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
08/2017 – 07/2020

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 4646 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/bilbao>



## Turin (IT), Urban poverty

*“Co-City is an extraordinary opportunity to support new forms of active participation of citizens in the regeneration of the city. I hope that new enterprises will be created around this new model of relationship between the public and private sectors, generating new employment opportunities and jobs in Turin.”*

Chiara Appendino, Mayor of Turin



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
03/2017 – 02/2020

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 4 126 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://bit.ly/2Ry5dyE>





## Maribor (SI), Circular economy

“Only tight cooperation between public companies, citizens, industry and local government can lead to successful mutually connected system, which optimises resources and economic, environmental and social results. This is a long-term project of transformation to a different society, which ensures developmentally focused management of resources in local and regional areas.”

Andrej Fištravec, Mayor of Maribor



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
12/2017 – 11/2020

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 3 000 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://bit.ly/2AS48uC>



## Lahti (FI), Urban mobility

“Sustainable urban mobility is a key focus area of Lahti for the next years. Our aim is to find the most inspiring ways to attract more people to walk, cycle and use public transportation. Through CitiCAP, we will build a completely new public incentive, the personal carbon trade (PCT), that may revolutionise the participation of citizens in climate change mitigation.”

Jyrki Myllyvirta, Mayor of Lahti



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
01/2018 – 12/2020

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 3 800 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://bit.ly/2RDqpn6>



## Gothenburg (SE), Energy transition

“The FED project confirms Gothenburg as a frontrunner in developing the energy solutions of a fossil-free society. The idea is to reduce energy consumption by establishing a local market place for electricity, heating and cooling. Hopefully, this model will prove capable of speeding up energy transition across Europe.”

Ann-Sofie Hermansson,  
Mayor of Gothenburg



**PROJECT DURATION:**  
11/2016 – 10/2020

**EU INVESTMENT:**  
EUR 4 655 000

**MORE INFORMATION:**  
<https://bit.ly/2Ud7ssQ>



# Investing in Cohesion Policy: a priority for Rhineland-Palatinate

Minister-President Malu Dreyer and Economics Minister Dr Volker Wissing of the Rhineland-Palatinate give their views on current and future Cohesion Policy support in their region.

Mainz, Germany

*How do you respond to the perception that comparatively well-off regions from net contributor Member States do not need Cohesion Policy support?*

**Minister-President Malu Dreyer:** Of course, Rhineland-Palatinate is currently one of the EU's more developed regions. The European objectives cannot be achieved without strong regions, but even strong regions need structural support. Funding also helps to convey the positive impact of the EU on the ground, beyond the purely financial aspects.



**Malu Dreyer**  
Minister-President of the  
Rhineland-Palatinate



**Dr Volker Wissing**  
Economics Minister for the  
Rhineland-Palatinate

*The current regional programme aims to strengthen innovation, enhance SMEs' competitiveness and support the shift towards a low-carbon economy. How far have these goals been achieved?*

**Dr Wissing:** With 40% of ERDF funding allocated, we are giving priority to research and development within the Rhineland-Palatinate ERDF programme.

EU funds systematically and consistently strengthen the innovation capacity of companies and thus the economy of the region. In addition, the efficiency of research institutions and universities will be significantly increased.

By helping SMEs – e.g. by supporting the modernisation or expansion of business premises – the ERDF is making

a significant contribution to bolstering the competitiveness of enterprises and to maintaining and creating jobs in less developed parts of the country.

The ERDF also supports measures to achieve policy objectives in the area of climate protection and the objective of sustainable growth, in line with the EU 2020 Strategy, including through the



“EU funds systematically and consistently strengthen the innovation capacity of companies and thus the economy of the region.”

newly launched support programme for increasing energy and resource efficiency in enterprises (ERGU). Every subsidised investment in a company leads to an increase in energy and resource efficiency.

*Interreg is a key pillar of Cohesion Policy. What contacts do you have with other European regions and how do you benefit from them?*

**Minister-President Malu Dreyer:** Rhineland-Palatinate is the German state with the largest number of European neighbouring states. With France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands, the Interreg A programmes ‘Greater Region’, ‘Upper Rhine’ and ‘Meuse-Rhine Euroregion’ have enabled us to have a close and trusting relationship since the first funding period. In addition, there is the Interreg B programme ‘Northwest Europe’ which currently extends from Ireland to the centre of Germany.

Through countless projects, institutions in Rhineland-Palatinate have cooperated with partners in neighbouring regions, set investments in motion, conducted research, and experienced a borderless Europe. Particularly in the Greater Region, where Rhineland-Palatinate cooperates with Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg and East Belgium, it is essential to have close European cooperation, especially for the labour market and mobility: our region has the largest commuter flows in the EU.

That is why we have great hopes for future Interreg programmes to bring citizens in the border regions closer

together and to find potential solutions for mobility, protection of the environment and the sustainable, innovative and digital economy. I therefore hope that adequate funding will be made available for Interreg programmes so that we can continue to tackle these challenges.

*An innovative approach to the ESIF has involved the use of revolving funds and other financial engineering instruments. How do you use such instruments?*

**Dr Wissing:** We have developed the Rhineland-Palatinate Innovation Fund as a financial instrument, to name one example. The fund, which is co-financed by the ERDF, provides up-and-coming technology-oriented companies with venture capital, in the form of open or silent participations under attractive conditions, which can be used to develop and launch innovative products, production processes and services. This improves the equity base of these companies and creates the financial prerequisites for the successful launch of technology companies.

*Looking at ESIF 2021-2027, how do you see Cohesion Policy priorities evolving?*

**Dr Wissing:** As regards the Commission’s political goals for the next funding period, we can continue to support companies, especially in technological development and implementation of innovation, while improving research infrastructure. It is also important that we support companies in economically underdeveloped areas

of Rhineland-Palatinate in the construction of new buildings, extensions and modernisation. We are carrying out a successful, diversified promotion programme for SMEs which we want to pursue further. We hope that the draft regulations submitted so far will be amended to take this into consideration.

We are pursuing the goal of a low-carbon Europe and, through our ERGU programme, we can increase energy and resource efficiency in commercial companies. Companies that save CO<sub>2</sub>, consume less energy or materials, or reduce their waste can receive financial support through the programme.

However, we are concerned about negotiations on the EU’s new Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF). The Commission proposal of May 2018 already foresees a significant reduction in the ERDF envelope. The Council and Parliament should reach a responsible compromise that will take account of the real needs of European regions in order to strengthen local competitiveness and, above all, rural development. European Cohesion Policy is a model of success worldwide which should be reflected in the next MFF. ■



# Support for coal regions in transition to sustainable economies

**As mines close down across Europe's remaining coal-producing regions, the EU is providing support to help their economies make the transition as smooth as possible to more sustainable, greener businesses – providing new opportunities for growth and jobs.**

Coal used to be one of Europe's main fuels. However, as the EU makes the transition to a climate neutral economy, as set out in the recent Commission Communication on A Clean Planet for all – A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy, coal production and consumption are declining.

That transition is already well under way. In 1990, coal provided for almost 41 % of the gross energy consumption in the current 28 EU countries, while in 2015 this had dropped to 16 %. Despite the gradual decline in its use since the 1990s, coal remains important in particular for many of the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Currently, around 185 000 Europeans are directly employed in the remaining active coal-mining operations in 41 regions in 12 EU countries. Another 53 000 work in coal-fired power plants (see 'Coal in the EU – a snapshot').

Experience has demonstrated that without long-term planning and supporting measures, the transition can be painful. Former coal-mining regions can suffer from decades of structural unemployment, with significant social impacts on people, their communities and public finances.



In response, the European Commission has launched an initiative to provide tailored support for coal and carbon-intensive regions.

In parallel, it has also launched a pilot action on regions in industrial transition with 12 selected regions. This pilot will help to test new approaches to industrial transition and provide the European Commission with evidence to underpin post-2020 policies and programmes.

These complementary initiatives open up new ways to address the challenges regions face in managing the transition to smarter, greener, climate neutral economies, with a particular focus on their smart specialisation strategies.

They also contribute to the EU’s vision of modernising Europe’s economy through digitalisation, technological and social innovation, decarbonisation and the circular economy.

A more detailed article on the pilot action on industrial transition will be published in a future issue of *Panorama*. This article focuses on the initiative for coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition.

### No region left behind

The EU is committed to ensuring that no region is left behind in the ongoing shift to a sustainable society and the move away from an economy driven by fossil fuels. In particular, Cohesion Policy supports structural and long-term responses to the challenges regions face when making the transition to a climate neutral economy. Cohesion Policy with its integrated, place-based approach and smart specialisation is the main EU policy instrument to address structural changes, not least in the context of clean energy transition. It works in partnership with actors on the ground in a holistic approach.

The aim is to help regions become more resilient and adapt to the economic, social and territorial impacts resulting from the transition. For example, the measures support SMEs, business incubators, innovation, cooperation between industry and researchers, capacity-building skills, sustainable transport, social inclusion and the shift to a low-carbon economy.

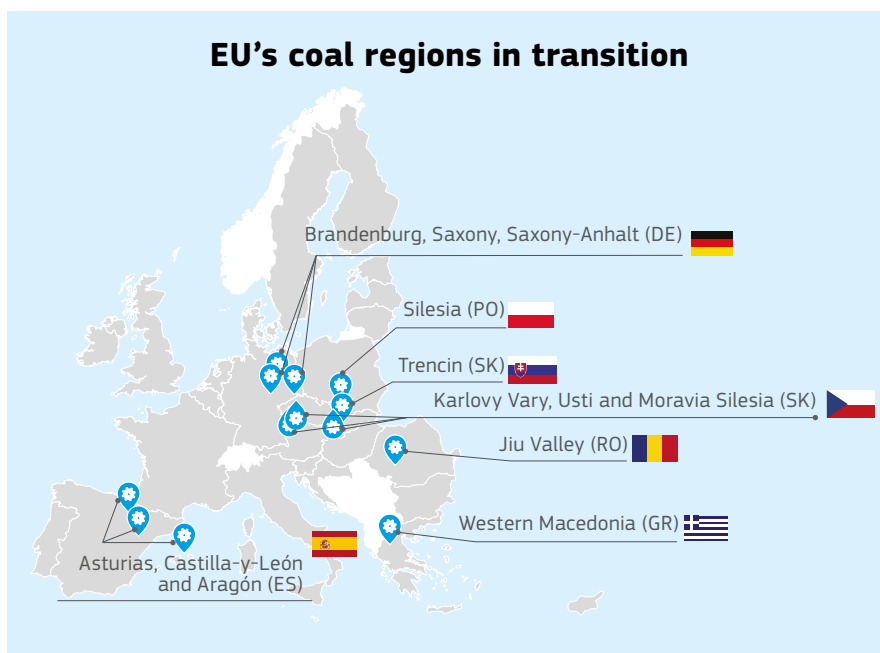
Smart specialisation strategies are at the core of much of the work done through the initiative on coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition. These strategies help regions to diversify their economies and make structural transformation that supports a sustainable post-coal economy.

Through these measures, Cohesion Policy is making a key contribution to the initiative on coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition, both to the country teams established to help specific pilot regions and to the multi-stakeholder platform providing further tailored support.

‘The EU is committed to ensuring that nobody and no region is left behind in the shift towards a low-carbon economy,’ says Corina Crețu, the Commissioner for Regional Policy. ‘The EU Cohesion Policy significantly invests to foster growth and jobs in coal regions by helping them identify, develop and invest in new areas of competitive strength – what we call smart specialisation.’

### Country teams – tailor-made to a region’s needs

Under the first strand of the initiative, operational country teams provide expertise and advice on funding tailored to each region’s particular situation, stage of development and growth strategy. In 2017 and 2018, the European Commission launched a series of such teams, on request, to support pilot coal regions in their transition efforts.



Today, the initiative delivers tailor-made assistance to 13 pilot regions in seven EU countries: Silesia (Poland), Trenčín (Slovakia), Western Macedonia (Greece), Jiu Valley (Romania), Karlovy Vary, Ústí and Moravia Silesia (Czechia), Brandenburg, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt (Germany) and Asturias, Castilla-y-León and Aragón (Spain).

The teams interact closely with regional and national authorities and other relevant actors to develop pragmatic solutions to the challenges posed by structural transformation. The country teams support the development of strategies and projects to accelerate the process of economic diversification and technological transition. The teams also guide the regions on the best way to access available funding, leverage their smart specialisation strategies, drive innovative businesses, and implement decarbonisation strategies.

These strategies can include diversifying to use clean energy sources as part of the transition, for example. Project initiatives may include building geothermal energy plants in former coal mines, investing in e-mobility, digitalisation and data centres, creating innovation parks, forming local energy communities, and developing tourism and agricultural activities. They may be eligible for existing EU funding.

This also includes Cohesion Policy funding which provides a stable, long-term investment framework and already address many of the challenges in these regions but at the same time is also flexible (via reprogramming) when new needs or unexpected events arise.

The pilot regions then share the experiences from this work through the Coal Regions in Transition Platform.

## Sharing expertise

The platform, launched at the end of 2017, brings together regional and national representatives, social partners, industry and civil society to share best practices and learn from each other. It provides access to technical support, capacity building and sharing experience with other parts of Europe.

European Commission experts help with support and tools, such as peer-to-peer exchanges or technical assistance to facilitate the preparation of a coherent transition strategy.

They have found that EU countries and the coal regions in transition are very motivated to develop strategies and take concrete actions. The benefits for participants could include assistance with refining strategies and project ideas with a potential to kick-start the transition process, including feedback on relevant EU policies, programmes, funds and financing in focused discussions with the Commission and external experts.

Two working groups form part of the expertise provided for those participating in the platform. These groups facilitate dialogue on good practices, project ideas and regional strategies. They also hold project-focused labs involving Commission and external experts.

The Post Coal Economy and Structural Transformation working group covers strategies and projects focusing on the economic diversification of coal regions. The Energy System Transformation and Clean Air working group focuses on strategies and projects on improving air quality and coal-based technologies that are compatible with the EU's long-term vision for a climate neutral economy.

Other measures are also ongoing via the initiative on coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition. The Commission is working to attract international investors to provide financing for projects in the targeted coal regions. For example, it has launched one such partnership with US investor Michael Bloomberg and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

European Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič says the aim is to position the EU as an international hub of expertise for the regional transition and to foster multilateral cooperation.

'Climate action starts in our regions,' says Commissioner Šefčovič. 'That is why we have launched a structural support for coal and carbon-intensive regions – to support the modernisation of their economies and address the social impacts of the low-carbon transition. It is about people's health, their jobs as well as about opportunities for the future.'



The Coal Regions in Transition Platform is led by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy in close cooperation with the Directorates-General for Regional and Urban Policy and Research and Innovation, which co-chair the working groups.

Funding for the coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition is available, for instance, through the Cohesion Policy, Horizon 2020, the LIFE programme and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund. ■

A dedicated secretariat for the initiative will be established in early 2019 and will provide toolkits, guidance as well as technical assistance to all coal and carbon-intensive regions across the EU for the development and implementation of their transition strategies and related projects.

FIND OUT MORE

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



## ENERGY CONSUMPTION

1990  
**41 % coal**



2015  
**16 % coal**

**207 coal-fired power plants**  
in 21 EU countries

**6 countries** rely on coal for at least **20 %** of their energy  
(Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Poland and Slovakia)



**128 coal mines**  
in **12 EU countries**  
**41 regions**

**185 000 Europeans** directly employed in coal mining



**53 000 employed** in coal-fired power plants



**215 000 indirect jobs** dependent on **coal activities**

Source: EU coal regions: opportunities and challenges ahead, Joint Research Centre

# Cohesion Policy support for mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas



**Cohesion Policy pays particular attention to regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas (Article 174 TFEU).**

The ESIF regulatory framework for 2014-2020 lays down provisions, such as the derogation to thematic concentration or adjustment of the co-financing rate, and offers several possibilities to better address the needs of these areas and support their potential.

In 2014-2020, 15 Member States highlighted in their programming documents (Partnership Agreements) the challenges they face due to their insular, mountainous or sparsely populated characteristics. DG REGIO commissioned an expert

analysis to gain an in-depth knowledge on how these Member States are using the possibilities for supporting and strengthening the development of islands, mountains and sparsely populated areas through EU Cohesion Policy in the 2014-2020 programming period.

**Gilda Carbone**, author of 'Expert Analysis on Geographical Specificities Mountains, Islands and Sparsely Populated Areas Cohesion Policy 2014-2020', talks about the main findings of her research, presented at the European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels 2018.

*What approach did Member States take to deal with territories with geographical specificities?*

We did a survey with the relevant managing authorities in the different Member States and found different approaches and perceptions among them. Each country dealt differently with

territories with geographical specificities: dedicated Operational Programmes (OP) (e.g. the South Aegean Islands' regional programme in Greece or the Balearic Islands OP in Spain) or part of a broader programme area (e.g. the Lorraine and Vosges Massif OP in France).

Although not always expressly mentioned in the dedicated section of the Partnership Agreements and OP, the specific needs of these territories have generally been considered and addressed in the programming documents and, in some cases, integrated territorial tools have been used.

*What main challenges have been identified in relation to mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas?*

Preservation and protection of the environment is generally a key priority for areas with geographical specificities. One of the main challenges is to find



a good balance between environmental and resource efficiency, on the one hand, and socio-economic factors for growth and development, on the other hand.

Other important sectors of interventions are connectivity, both physical and digital, better access to public services, and renewable energies.

*How have Member States used the possibilities offered by the 2014-2020 regulatory framework for Cohesion Policy?*

There was a low take-up of the possibilities offered by the 2014-2020 ESIF regulations (i.e. derogation to thematic concentration, adjustments to co-financing rate, etc.). These provisions were used to a very limited extent and seemed unnecessary (i.e. increased co-financing rates lead to smaller overall national public investment).

The attention to territories with geographical specificities was somewhat assured in the implementation phase through other means, such as attributing additional points to projects targeting these areas in the selection phase (i.e. Italy, OP Friuli Venezia Giulia). We also identified some good examples of setting up dedicated financial instruments (e.g. a national FI set up for Bornholm Island in Denmark or an FI managed by Almi Invest in Sweden) and designing integrated local strategies targeting specific issues also connected to the insular, mountainous or sparsely populated character of territories (e.g. Provere strategy in Portugal or the Inner Areas strategy in Italy).

*Is there continuity and consistency between programming and implementation in the current programming period?*

There is sufficient continuity and consistency from planning in the Partnership Agreement with programming in the OP, but there is scope for improvement, especially when it comes to concrete implementation and launching dedicated calls for targeted projects for these areas.

The expert analysis also identified good practice projects for each category of territories (mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas), selected from all the very valid projects reported by the Managing Authorities of the selected OPs.

*What are the key messages for a Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 close to territories with geographical specificities?*

Cohesion Policy should continue to play an important role in supporting mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas. Territories with geographical specificities are not one single block. Thus the place-based approach definitely contributes to the territorial cohesion of territories with geographical specificities as it is based on local and regional needs, builds on the specific strengths of these territories and aims to disclose the related potential.

Future regulations should provide a flexible, simple and enabling environment to address the needs and challenges of

territories with geographical specificities. There are multiple ways to serve the needs of these areas (integrated territorial investments, community local led development, financial engineering instruments, attributing additional points to projects in areas with geographical specificities in the selection phase, etc.). Where there is a need there is a way!

*Based on your long experience in regional policy issues, what do you consider are the essential issues to help the potential of these areas?*

The integrated approach is essential, especially in territories with geographical specificities; interventions may have a greater impact if they focus on different but interlinked sectors.

The exchange of good practices and knowledge among countries and regions facing similar challenges (i.e. insular or mountainous, etc.) could facilitate and increase the setting up of targeted integrated territorial strategies and financial instruments. Learning from peers is essential.

Furthermore, the European Territorial Cooperation programmes and Macro-Regional Strategies play an important role because many of these territories are right on the borders of EU countries which means a coordinated approach could definitely bring value added. ■

**FIND OUT MORE**

<https://europa.eu/!Ch43CB>

# CAPTURED ON CAMERA



*The Square conference centre at Mont des Arts in Brussels was the main venue for this year's event*



*Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and Commissioner Corina Crețu at the high-level event: Energy Union in motion – Cohesion Policy supporting coal regions in transition*



## EUROPEAN WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES 2018

Thanks to over 6 000 participants and 300 partners representing more than 140 regions and cities from across Europe, this year's European Week of Regions and Cities proved to be one of the most successful yet. Here is a snapshot of the numerous events, workshops, exhibitions and presentations which contributed to the debate on the role of a strong Cohesion Policy in tackling future challenges in the EU.



### FIND OUT MORE

[https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/\\_en](https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/_en)

### 2019

The dates of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2019 are now confirmed : **7 – 10 October 2019**

For the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of the **#EURegionsWeek** partners are invited to submit their **proposals** for sessions (workshops, Regio talks, participatory labs or presentations followed by Q&A) and/or exhibitions and possible tastings at the Agora Village. Applications can be made from **30/01 to 29/03/2019**

For the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the **Regiostars Awards**, **up to 5 entries** will be possible **by programme**, irrespective of the category. Commissioner Crețu will launch the competition on **19<sup>th</sup> February** with Commissioner Andriukaitis. Deadline for applications: **9 May**.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the **#Youth4Regions** programme will be launched on **8 April** for journalism students or recent graduates. Deadline application **mid-July**.

Subscribe to your newsletter to receive the latest information: [https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/home\\_en](https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/home_en)





Taking a short break from the workshop on 'The future of Health in Europe'



Participants share ideas in the 'Social Economy and Entrepreneurship for EU Regions' workshop



Younger contributors speak up in the debate on 'The power of youth participation in medium-sized cities'



All eyes on the #EUandME campaign featuring five short films showing how EU rights and benefits improve our daily lives



Centre stage for winners of the Urban Innovative Actions initiative which gives cities resources to finance innovative projects



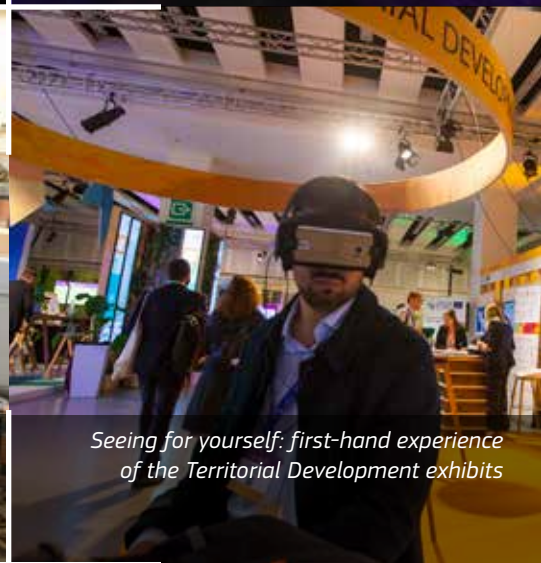
Commissioner Crețu and the 2018 jury members applaud this year's RegioStars winners



Smiles all round for the Portuguese Business and Shared Services Centre, winners of the RegioStars 2018 'Supporting smart industrial transition' category



During a visit to Greenbizz, participants learn more about the facilities and services available to support sustainable economy projects



Seeing for yourself: first-hand experience of the Territorial Development exhibits



URBACT in the Urban Centre which features a virtual reality space, a meet & game corner and an open theatre



Kenneth from Ireland and Susann from Estonia relate their Road Trip Project adventures



Anthony Gardner, former US Ambassador to the EU closes a very successful EWRC on a high note





# When Cohesion Policymakers meet young researchers

Wolfgang Petzold and Madeleine Nygrund report on the 6<sup>th</sup> Master Class on EU Cohesion Policy at the 2018 European Week of Regions and Cities, held in Brussels from 8-11 October.

‘The high value of the Master Class is getting an idea of the institutions and their work, getting to know the representatives of the EU institutions and learning what issues they deal with and how. This is quite a unique opportunity in the multiplicity of PhD courses out there.’ This quote, which comes from one of the 30 PhD students and early career researchers who attended the recent Master Class on EU Cohesion Policy, summarises very well the objective of this unique format which has been a feature of the #EURegionsWeek for six years now.

Measuring the impact of EU Cohesion Policy has been a principle of its design ever since. It is therefore no surprise that about 800 of the 6000 participants attending the European Week of Regions and Cities every year are working in research. This makes the week one of the biggest annual gatherings of academics in the field of urban and regional policy worldwide. Giving the most promising of them access to the makers of EU Cohesion Policy in Brussels was the idea behind the Master Class concept.

The concept was established in 2013, when the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) joined forces with the Regional Studies Association (RSA). Since 2015, the European Regional Science Association (ERSA), the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) have joined the consortium of organisers.

## A great opportunity

By early May every year, between 80 and 120 applicants compete to participate in the five-day format. They must either be a PhD student or an assistant professor and must send a paper proposal, the final version of which they present for debate during the Master Class. Since 2013, 180 participants have been involved and a survey among them confirmed that the opportunity to better understand the EU institutions and the possibility to become part of an international research community is most appreciated. Former Master Class students have published articles and books together and continued their careers as assistant professors or researchers in international projects.





**Wolfgang Petzold**  
Deputy Director, European Committee of the Regions



**Madeleine Nygrund**  
Administrator, Directorate for Communication,  
European Committee of the Regions

The 30 PhD students and early career researchers attending the 2018 Class came from 13 EU Member States and two non-EU countries (Albania and the United States). Their papers, summarised in a (non-public) 334-page 'book', focused on three themes: (1) reshaping governance and institutional relations; (2) territorial cohesion and cooperation; and (3) policy effectiveness in response to development challenges for European regions. They received feedback from 12 discussants from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the CoR during sessions at the beginning of the week.

## Comprehensive agenda

Subsequent sessions, panel debates, world café meetings and informal talks provided an opportunity to meet 30 EU policy-makers, officials and renowned academics. One of the highlights was the panel debate on the future of EU Cohesion Policy, with Iskra Mihaylova, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the Committee on Regional Development, Marc Lemaître, Director-General of DG REGIO, and Johannes Rossbacher, current chair of the Structural Measures Working Party of the Council of the EU. Moderated by Professor John Bachtler, Director of the European Policies Research Centre in Glasgow and Delft, the debate covered the dynamics of the

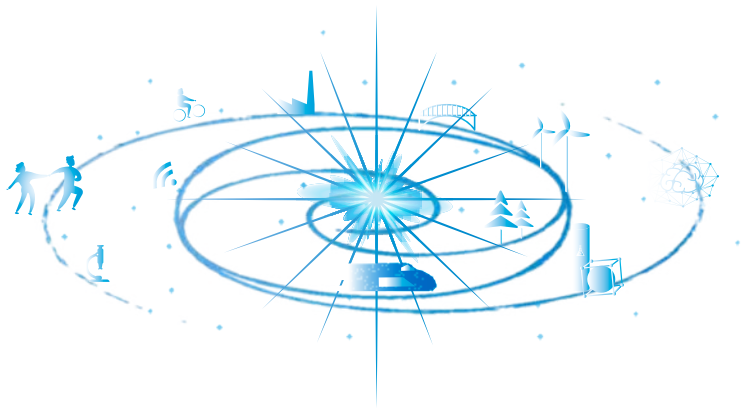
negotiations on the 2021-2027 regulations and the role of evidence and research in this context. In other sessions, the participants were able to discuss the work of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) and the challenges of international research projects. Half of each session is usually dedicated to debate and interaction to avoid any extensive one-way communications.

In evaluating the Master Class, participants were very positive in their assessment of the programme, the organisation and the relevance of the course for their future careers. They particularly appreciated meeting representatives from the EU institutions and learning more about the linkages between research, including their own, and policymaking.

To conclude, the Master Class represents a unique format bringing together highly motivated young researchers and an inter-institutional community of interested policymakers, officials and academics. It is a long-term investment which contributes to the quality of research on EU Cohesion Policy. ■

## FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/2DQI1fQ>



## RegioStars 2018

Once again, the European Commission's RegioStars Awards have put some of the most innovative projects by Europe's regions in a glittering spotlight. Winners were announced by Commissioner Creţu at a spectacular ceremony in Brussels on 9 October as part of the 2018 EU Week of Regions and Cities. Awards were in five categories: industrial transition, low-carbon economy, access to public services, migration challenges, and cultural heritage. To add to the excitement, a sixth winner was revealed, chosen from the 21 finalists by a public vote.



### Rural economy goes high tech, Fundão, Portugal

The small rural city of Fundão is attracting investment, creating job opportunities and promoting innovation thanks to the Business and Shared Services Centre (CNSP) project. It developed a business centre, skills training and enterprise support focused on IT for education (TICE). The high-tech gamble paid off. The centre has attracted 14 specialist companies, creating 500 highly skilled jobs, and generated 68 start-ups and 200 private investments projects in diverse sectors, old and new.



### Rags to riches, via recycling, Helsinki-Uusimaa, Finland

A process demonstration system developed in the TeKiDe project recycles cotton-based textile waste into new fibres. In trials, this demonstration platform turned old cotton textiles into viscose-like fibres. The fibres were of high enough quality to be used in a dress for a national gala. In future, the demonstration platform will help to accelerate the development of sustainable processes to regenerate cellulose fibres and to solve issues related to recycling and processing waste textiles.





### City pilot for social housing, Ostrava, Czechia

The city of Ostrava has piloted a social housing system for people unable to access private housing, as Czechia has no national social housing law. It has created procedures to apply for social housing and that evaluate housing shortage, in cooperation with city districts. Tenants also receive support from social services, if needed. So far, the project has housed families in 105 flats – 5 emergency flats and 100 social flats – with feedback from tenants to optimise the system.



### One-stop shop for refugee integration, Murcia, Spain

The Murcia Regional Employment and Training Service has set up a protocol to work with four NGOs to help refugees integrate. The protocol coordinates employment services, social services and the NGOs for more efficient, complete support for refugees to become independent members of local communities. Refugees receive personalised advice, training and language lessons to help them to look for work and establish new lives in a process that aims to minimise stress and maximise chances of success.



### Increased access to Welsh heritage, Nant Gwrtheyrn, Wales

A renovation project has modernised a Welsh language centre in the abandoned 19<sup>th</sup> century quarry village of Nant Gwrtheyrn to create a popular Welsh-heritage and tourism centre. A new access road, language teaching rooms, an education centre, a café and dining room and renovated tourist accommodation welcome guests to the picturesque coastal site throughout the year. Nant Gwrtheyrn now employs over 30 staff and receives over 50 000 visitors annually, with a turnover of more than EUR 1.7 million in 2018.

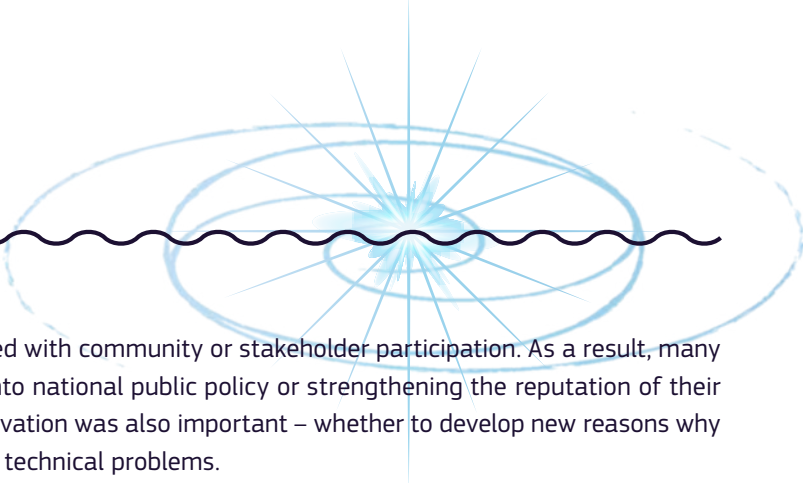


### Restoring Ílhavo's porcelain past, Ílhavo, Portugal

Porcelain is an important part of Ílhavo's industrial heritage, with the Fábrica da Vista Alegre porcelain factory on-site since 1842. This project has restored and expanded the Vista Alegre Museum to better showcase its industrial history and a unique collection of over 30 000 pieces of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century porcelain. The museum is now almost 20 times its original size while a nearby chapel and theatre have been renovated to host cultural and private events, boosting tourism in the region.







## KEYS TO SUCCESS

The winners were sustainable, integrated projects designed with community or stakeholder participation. As a result, many were so successful that initiatives are being integrated into national public policy or strengthening the reputation of their regions. In projects aiming to reverse negative trends, innovation was also important – whether to develop new reasons why someone would visit a cultural site, or to find solutions to technical problems.

*“Take risks and find solutions.”*

*TeKiDe, Finland*



*“Community participation ... has contributed significantly to our success.”*

*Business and Shared Services Centre, Fundão, Portugal*

## TAKEAWAYS FROM THE AWARDS

Above all, projects saw how European funds have had an impact on communities and address diverse issues. The Awards were also an opportunity to gain new knowledge about other regions and to discover solutions to other problems. Winners enjoyed the evening’s creative atmosphere, where they shared ideas, experience and a willingness to build new things. They left the ceremony with strengthened networks from the wide range of participants and encouraged to continue in their work.

*“It was exciting to meet people from across the EU who faced similar challenges.”*

*Nant Gwrtheyrn, Wales, UK*



“ [We] saw how European funds have turned into real things with a positive impact. ”

City of Ostrava, Czechia



## WHAT NEXT?

The support for their projects and the international recognition from the Awards was welcomed by all projects. On a more personal level, many felt honoured by this sign that the European Commission values their work. Visibility from this distinction will make it easier to demonstrate solutions, promote activities and lead to new opportunities, including new partners, according to the winners. They look forward to continued growth in their activities for a sustainable, prosperous future.



“ The Award gives relevance to [our] efforts to face the challenge of migration. ”

Murcia Regional Employment and Training Service, Spain

“ Winning the People’s Choice Award ... will motivate more people to visit Ílhavo. ”

Municipality of Ílhavo, Portugal



## YOUTH4REGIONS MEDIA PROGRAMME

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.



*Anina Vontavon's article is the second of four winning texts in the Youth4Regions media programme blogging competition for young journalists.*

# A creative spirit of innovation among small businesses



Although currently finishing her Master's degree in European Studies at the Ruhr University

of Bochum in Germany, Anina keeps ties close to home. The 25-year-old journalist writes for the local newspaper in Brizen, her hometown in the north of Italy. In the future, she hopes to focus her reporting on European issues.

A farm is looking for a new processing method for its home-grown apples. This innovation process, which is typical for companies, usually takes place behind closed doors and is generally associated with considerable costs.

With globalisation and the opening up of markets, small companies in particular often experience difficulties in remaining competitive. This can be particularly problematic for regions such as South Tyrol: looking at the prevailing economic climate there, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a particularly significant role. There are almost 44 000 companies in South Tyrol, 99.3% of which are SMEs. They employ over three-quarters of South Tyrolean workers in the private sector and, in 2014, generated a turnover of EUR 23.1 billion.

It was for this reason that, in 2012, South Tyrol's largest trade association, 'lvh - Wirtschaftsverband für Handwerker' started the Open Innovation South Tyrol project together with the Munich innovation agency Hyve AG. As part of the project, SMEs can publish their ideas and



*“With comparatively minimal expenditure on the part of the companies, a maximum number of ideas can be put forward.”*



related issues on an internet platform to find solutions with the help of people outside the company. The goal is to support the companies during every phase of the innovation process, whether it is brainstorming, implementation, or the search for a new area of application for an already completed project.

At the regional level, the intention is to try and create the same economic conditions for small businesses as for large companies, to eliminate any imbalance. It has been a success. The platform already has over 2700 registered members: more than 1600 ideas and over 4000 comments have

been submitted and 18 competitions for ideas have been held. What has hitherto only been achieved in large innovation centres in the USA, now also works at the regional level – a small community of idea-seekers and creative minds was formed to work together on projects.

Open Innovation South Tyrol's concept works in a similar way to most social media portals: you can register on the platform and take part in competitions to showcase your own ideas. With comparatively minimal expenditure on the part of the companies, a maximum number of ideas can be put forward. In addition to the project being implemented, the winners also receive another prize, usually in the form of a weekend stay at a South Tyrolean wellness hotel or a non-cash prize.

The project is financed by the public sector. Open Innovation South Tyrol is part of the Operational Programme 'Regional Competitiveness and Employment', and thus part of the European Regional Development Fund. During the 2007-2013 funding period, EUR 70 million was used to support projects, with EUR 136 million planned for the 2014-2020 period. ■

*As part of the Youth4Regions media programme, future journalists attend training sessions and work during the EU Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels. This is how two young journalists, Aurore Dessaigne and Iskra Tsankova, experienced the programme.*

## Being a part of the ‘EU bubble’

They say that if you love your profession you will never have to work a day in your life. The European Week of Regions and Cities made me realise how dynamic, interesting and pleasing journalism can be when you are part of a community of passionate people with similar interests. I enjoyed every second of it to the fullest.

Coming to Brussels for the European Week of Regions and Cities I had no idea what to expect apart from the fact that I was going to cover an event with more than 6 000 participants as a young journalist. However, it turned out to be much more than that. I learnt a lot about the European Union as an organisation and about Cohesion Policy and regional development in a simple way, thanks to the amazing speakers and participants at the event. It was astonishing to me how by engaging in conversations with both our mentors and other young journalists you start thinking outside the box and look at things from a different perspective.

Having been born in Bulgaria and living there, I can definitely see the results of the projects co-financed by the European Commission since 2007 when Bulgaria joined the Union. From the simplest things, such as financing the construction of a small road between two villages to building a third metro line, it can easily be said that the policy for EU regional development has changed lives. When I was in Brussels, I was able to observe how this policy functions from the inside. Moreover, attending the RegioStars awards, I became aware of initiatives across Europe which have also made a great local impact.

Thus, I realised the importance of uniting around ideas that make a positive change and spreading the word about them.

What stood out for me during the European Week of Regions and Cities was the whole concept of the Youth4Regions media programme competition which aimed to promote understanding of Cohesion Policy and regional development, but most of all, aimed to gather young journalists around the same idea.



**Iskra Tsankova**  
Bulgaria

Visiting the EurActive team and meeting all the people behind such a global news platform pushed me towards wanting to perfect my knowledge of both foreign affairs and journalism principles. Being at the office and hearing about what it means to be a journalist from their point of view made me feel I was part of something big, a community of people from different parts of Europe who all had the same goal – to guide society towards understanding what is happening around the world and to produce quality news without censorship.

In conclusion, the best way I can describe my attendance at the European Week of Regions and Cities is being in the ‘EU bubble’ and experiencing the numerous events through the eyes of a soon-to-be professional journalist. Brussels is an amazing city but without visiting the European institutions and getting to know how they work from the inside, the concept of the city just isn’t complete. And being at the European Week of Regions and Cities I can definitely say that I got the whole idea of Brussels. And I loved it. ■

# Never forget the reason for our work

I went to the EU Week of Regions and Cities with a lot of thoughts. We are in a period of doubt, fear and disillusion – not only in the European system, but also in the journalistic world. On the European side, politicians in Brussels did not do enough to convince the citizens and they underestimated the need to communicate with them. On the journalistic side, polemics became more important than the public interest. Consequently, European politicians as well as the journalists lost the citizens. And nationalists and populists have only had to say what people wanted to hear. This shows us how it is important never to forget the reason for our work: the citizens.

## 28 countries, 28 perspectives

I think the main thing we need to understand is that we can get out of this period of fear but only all together – not divided. And that's why I think this EU Week of Regions and Cities and the Youth4Regions media programme were very significant, because journalists from all over Europe and European professionals worked together. Obviously, journalists need to keep their independence, but that doesn't mean that they can't share their thoughts and concerns with politicians.

First of all, meeting journalists from other countries opens our minds to what we need to change or improve. It shows us more solutions. We can imagine how we need to work together and how we can help each other. I met journalists from Spain, Ireland, Bulgaria, Poland, Italy and Germany. For example, in Ireland, the main concern is Brexit; in Italy, it's Matteo Salvini; in Poland, it's the 7<sup>th</sup> Article; in France, it's Marine Le Pen ... All the European countries are facing a lot of problems. And, as journalists, if we want to explain those problems to our citizens, primarily we must talk amongst ourselves. And, of course, to understand what is going on in Europe in general, not only in our own country, because everything is linked.



**Aurore Dessaigne**  
France

## Looking back to see the future

The future, obviously, is the 2019 European elections. At every conference I have been to there has always been a word about this. Even among journalists, we are already speaking about this main step towards Europe's future. And most of us are not really optimistic. But honestly, when we look back at Europe's history, the EU has already faced a lot of problems. Even its construction is based on the most horrific war in history.

Obviously, we won't wait for another war to act. It begins now. And journalists are a part of this challenge. It's something that I also realised during this EU Week. Journalists should be more pedagogic with citizens. This means that we always

need to show all the faces of a problem, not only the most popular one. We need to create a debate and not just among intellectuals, but among everyone.

## Working for and with the next generation

Young people: the last point but not the least. I think the new generation has a different point of view. Because this generation was born with Erasmus, with new technologies which erase distances, with cheaper transport ... it's easier now to travel across Europe. So maybe this new generation can better understand European values, and what it is possible to do thanks to the EU.

Therefore, with the Youth4Regions media programme, young people have the opportunity to enter EU institutions. And I think the EU should continue to inject the power of change in young people. Because whatever happens, whatever the results of the 2019 European elections, Europe's future is those young people. ■





# “Interreg Volunteer Youth”

## Its achievements and future plans

Through Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY), more than 200 young EU citizens have already seized the opportunity to volunteer for Interreg programmes and projects.

IVY is promoted by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, in collaboration with the European Solidarity Corps, and is managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR). It is all about experiencing cooperation, showing solidarity, and communicating Cohesion Policy. **Martín Guillermo Ramírez, Secretary General of AEBR, reflects on the initiative’s achievements, its benefits and future projects in the making.**

*Interreg Volunteer Youth has been running for over 18 months now. What are the main achievements and what makes IVY so special?*



The key to strengthening solidarity within the EU is to make its citizens aware of its benefits and achievements – and this is where the IVY initiative is playing a special role. Since its launch in March 2017, more than 200 volunteers (IVYs) have been involved in cross-border, transnational and interregional Interreg programmes and related projects – and the numbers keep on growing. To date, 34 Interreg programmes and over 80 projects have welcomed volunteers to help them reach their goals and give Interreg more visibility.

Informal feedback from hosting programmes and projects shows greater visibility and awareness of Interreg, territorial cooperation and also for the EU, due to its contribution to European integration from the bottom up.

IVY aims to make Cohesion Policy's advantages more visible for local communities and better known among the beneficiaries. This target has been met and can be seen from the success of the social media account @InterregYouth.

*Why should young people and host organisations alike join IVY? What is the added value for both?*

Such an experience enhances volunteers' sense of European solidarity, citizenship and civic engagement. When deployed in another European country – or at home, but exchanging with international partners – IVY volunteers learn from new environments, experience the diversity of Europe, and strengthen their foreign language and communication skills. They start to feel involved in building Europe, especially when they assist in cross-border interventions aimed at reducing obstacles and building trust, or when they report on the progress of such actions.

Younger generations bring new and fresh ideas, approaches and perspectives to organisations. For example, the skilful use

of social media is crucial today to reach a broad audience and make people aware of how their communities benefit from EU funding. Those of us of a certain age know very well that younger citizens might be better at helping with a social media strategy, as these are their main communication channels and they are better able to manage this new 'code'.

*Looking to the future, what's next in the IVY world?*

Because of its success, the European Commission has decided to extend IVY until December 2019. We aspire to make IVY a permanent feature, linked to the European Solidarity Corps and integrated within the core of all European territorial cooperation programmes.

The team working in the management of IVY is designing new activities linked to this initiative, focusing on its main purpose: promoting the social dimension of European territorial cooperation/Interreg and 'spreading the word' about its benefits. Among other tasks, IVY volunteers will cooperate with the ERDF-funded

Interact to compile Interreg 'stories' based on particularly meaningful projects. They will be published under the title 'Stories of European cooperation'. The main objective is to keep on raising awareness of Interreg, stressing the upside of the EU (Cohesion Policy), thanks to interviews, an eye-catching design and effective, fresh communication.

More ideas are currently being explored by AEBR and the Commission to involve volunteers more closely in other communication activities, too. Volunteers are contributing enormously to raising awareness of Cohesion Policy, so we must not miss such an opportunity. ■

**FIND OUT MORE**

<https://www.interregyouth.com/>



When I started working as a trainee for three months at the Deputy State Secretariat for Cohesion Policy Communications in Hungary, I had rarely heard anything about regional policies, but they needed someone in communication so it seemed like a good opportunity. The second time I got closer to Cohesion Policy was during my European Solidarity Corps experience with Interreg Central Europe. I thought it was a sign. To be honest, most of the time it is hard to see what is really happening in the Brussels bubble, but I realised that Cohesion Policy and territorial cooperation are part of policymaking when you can see relatively quickly the outcome of the work you have done. Anyone who works in politics or government will know this feeling, because we tend to focus on the big picture, so it is amazing to see that we can make a real difference to people's lives through our daily job. In addition, I see cooperation as a key to a smooth European future together and Interreg projects are the best examples of that. I would also mention the knowledge that they gain through pilot projects, because I see information sharing as a main point for development.

**Diana Zsoldos**

*IVY reporter with the Interreg Central Europe Joint Secretariat*





# EUSALP ‘Pitch your project for the EU’ contest

At this year’s EUSALP forum in Innsbruck, Austria, young people (16-25 years old) were given the opportunity to ‘pitch’ innovative project ideas to the audience of over 700 EU, national, regional and local stakeholders. Of the 17 project applications submitted, the jury selected 5 projects for the pitch session. The top three proposals won prizes worth EUR 5 000, 3 000 and 2 000.

## 1. ‘Alpine Ticket Network Meeting’

The members of the Cipra Youth Council won the first prize with their proposal focusing on a main topic of the Tyrolean Presidency: mobility. Their aim is to develop a joint solution for public transport in the Alpine Region that will enable cross-border travel with a single affordable ticket, thereby aiming to change people’s travel habits. Convening a network meeting to bring together the main stakeholders will be the first step.

## 2. ‘Beehave’

The ‘Beehave’ project, led by two young Italians, aims to combine economic effectiveness and bee protection, as bees are now particularly endangered in the Alpine Region. Sensors on the beehives will measure their temperature and humidity, allowing beekeepers to monitor the environmental quality and bees’ health, and to react quicker.

## 3. ‘Magical Alps’

This project from a group of 16-year-old Austrian students invites us to explore the legends and myths of the Alpine Region, in the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The collection of narratives will be accessible via a website and various other media. This will serve as an exchange tool with other schools and residents, and guide people interested in visiting these mystical places. ■

---

**FIND OUT MORE**

<https://bit.ly/2SwxCp3>

## NEWS [IN BRIEF]

## 99 THINGS TO DO IN EUROPE – AN ALTERNATIVE TOUR GUIDE

Great places to visit, new people to meet, hidden gems, fun facts, amazing food and smart travel tips are what the new online guide to Europe is all about.

Based on the experiences of the Road Trip Project travellers, '99 things to do in Europe' is an opportunity to create your own route and discover the continent for yourself. On the roadtripproject.eu website, you can now choose your destination, your favourite type of travel, and create your own journey!

During spring and summer 2018, four pairs of travellers embarked on a journey across the continent to explore a variety of projects and initiatives supported by the EU. Luisa and Louis, Yldau and Fabian, Susann and Kenneth and Luna and Achilleas visited 24 European countries along four successive routes: the Mediterranean (the route of the roots), the Atlantic, (the route of great explorers), the Danube, (the route of great nature and shared resources), and the Baltic (a route through time and space).

The second edition of the Road Trip Project will be launched in early spring 2019. Follow our social media channels for more information. ■



### FIND OUT MORE

[www.roadtripproject.eu](http://www.roadtripproject.eu)  
 Facebook: Europe in my region  
 Instagram: euinmyregion

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Since climate change sits high on the EU's agenda, at the end of 2016, DG REGIO commissioned a study on mapping the information available on climate change adaptation in the 28 Member States at project level.

The study presents a stocktake of available resources to assist the development of climate resilient infrastructures following seven study criteria (data availability; guidance; methodologies; tools; design standards; system and legal framework; institutional capacity) and covering the transport, broadband, urban development, energy, water and waste sectors.



The identified resources are non-exhaustive but present a snapshot of the readily available and accessible material during 2017. The study's final report is structured in two main parts: one general and one on country reports which also include project examples. The study shows a large number of resources related to climate change adaptation are available to infrastructure project developers while, at the same time, there are several areas where further resources could be made more accessible. ■

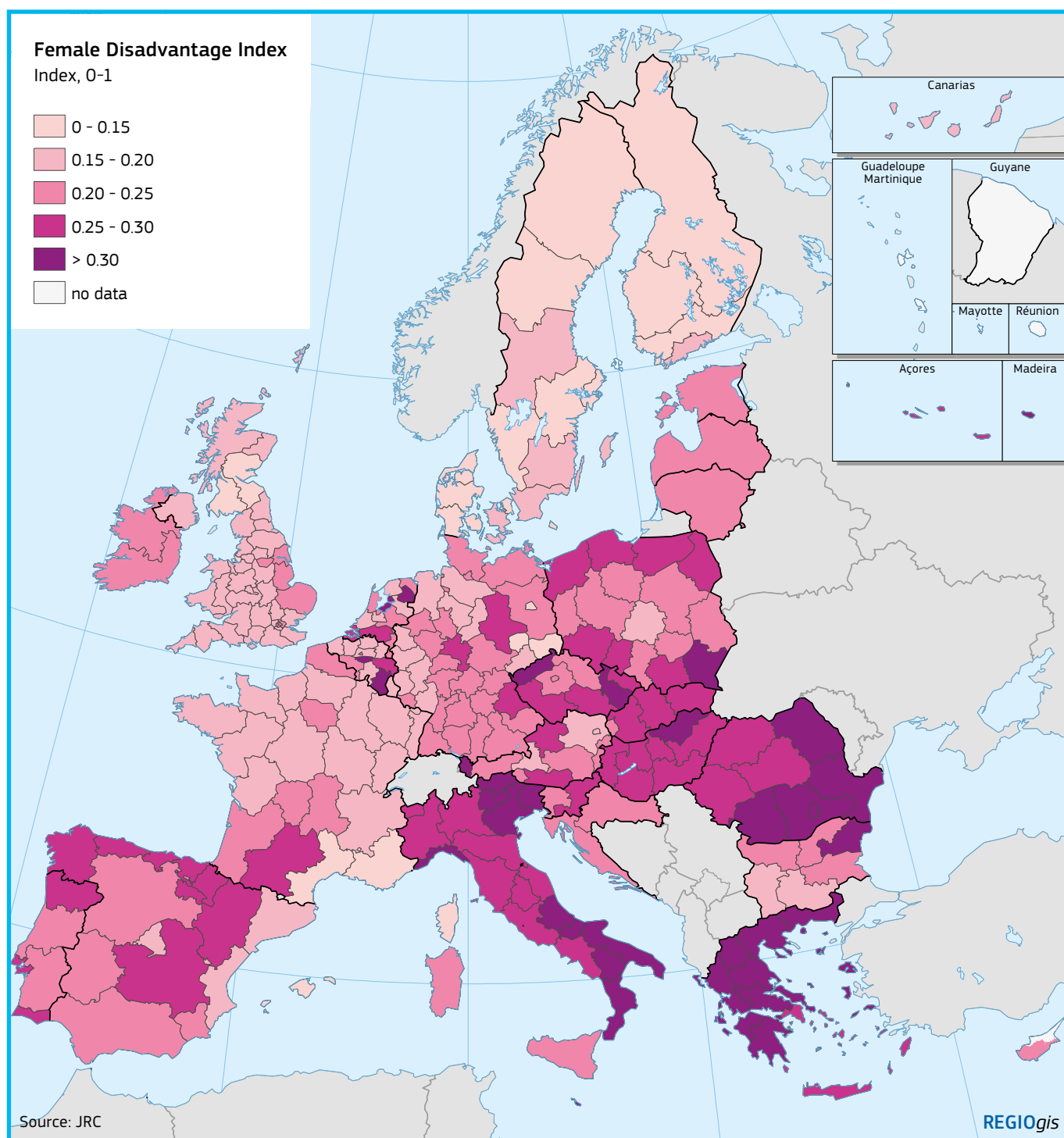
### FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!Fv86WC>

# A novel monitoring tool to measure gender equality in European regions

Gender equality is one of the EU's fundamental values and measuring its progress is an integral part of effective policymaking. While there are several tools to monitor this at the country level, there is no such instrument for capturing regional differences across Europe.

In the current regional monitoring tool, due composite indices have been developed to complement and support this multi-faceted phenomenon: the Female Disadvantage Index (FemDI) and the Female Achievement Index (FemAI). The first assesses female disadvantage by measuring regional differences where females are doing worse than males.





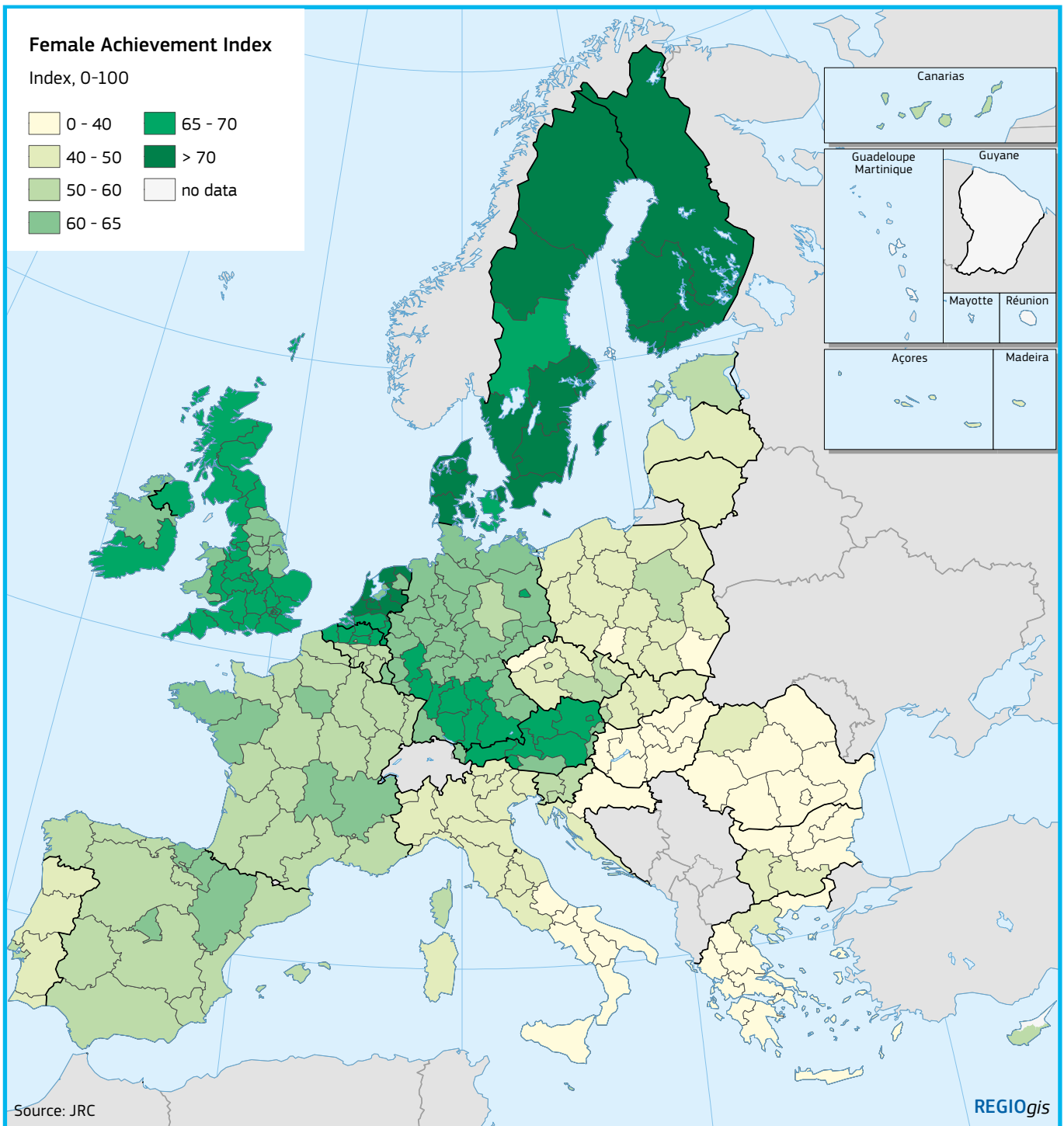
The second measures the level female achievement compared to the best female regional performance in Europe. Combining the two indices helps us to understand gender equality across different regions and between the Member States.

The European regional monitoring tool builds on seven domains relevant to EU policy: Work & Money, Knowledge, Time, Power, Health, Safety & Security, and Life quality. The domains organise and aggregate over 30 individual indicators into the summary measures of gender equality. The indices measure female disadvantage and achievement in almost all NUTS-2 level regions

(270 regions). The latest available data for the indicators have been retrieved from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC) microdata, European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS), Structure of Earnings Survey (EU SES), EIGE Gender Statistics Database and the Gallup World Poll microdata. Most data points derive from 2017. ■

**FIND OUT MORE**

<https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>



# European territorial cooperation for cultural heritage

To date, European territorial cooperation (ETC) has proved to be the ‘natural environment’ of successful cultural investments. Cooperation on Culture is not only the way to smooth synergies and linkages across borders and among countries, or to facilitate industrial transition and smart specialisation processes, but is also a tool for successfully promoting Europe as a destination towards world markets.

Cooperation on culture, creative industries and arts can be effective as it sets a solid foundation for countries and regions to work together in an efficient and sustainable way. It is interesting to note that in the current programming period, **cultural heritage and arts is the second most popular topic in Interreg programmes**. At present, and for the 2014-2020 timeline, **more than 9%** of the overall Interreg budget has already been invested in cultural projects with a further increase expected before the end of this programming period.

In the previous programming period, 2007-2013, Interreg investments in cultural heritage and arts received **10% of the overall Interreg budget** (EUR 1.2 B)<sup>1</sup>.

Interreg programmes are successful incubators for good cultural heritage projects which promote growth and create jobs in a sustainable way. The programmes are launched on a local intervention logic that reflects the specific needs of the participating regions, such as, for example, applying innovative solutions and ICT in less-favoured and peripheral regions. This could be further exploited through the industrial transition process in relation to creative industries.



In fact, Interreg is a **bottom-up instrument** which successfully combines the specificities of various localities, regions and countries around common projects. Testimonies from the many Interreg partners show that joint projects and actions reinforce the sense of belonging in a **common European space**.

Hence, the beginning of the **2018 EU Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH)** created an opportunity for both Interreg managing authorities and beneficiaries of Interreg programmes to become part of EYCH by participating in cultural initiatives and events across Europe. Subsequently, the Interreg managing authorities have mobilised more than 100 projects to apply for and secure the EYCH labelling.

<sup>1</sup>) The data come from the Keep.eu website (<https://www.keep.eu/keep/>): Keep is the only source of aggregated data for projects and beneficiaries of EU cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation programmes among Member States and between Member States and neighbouring countries.



Among these projects, cooperation is key when it comes to making the EU visible and bringing citizens closer to it. This is why the European Commission encouraged the creation of the e-book 'Connecting cultures, connected citizens', sponsored by the **2014-2020 Interact ERDF inter-regional programme**, to enable all European citizens to access Interreg cultural projects in their regions. It is important to show that European cooperation acts everywhere, by funding projects inside and outside Europe.

The e-book highlights cross-border, transitional and inter-regional projects co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).



**'Industrial Heritage' financed by the 2014-2020 Interreg A CBC Estonia-Latvia programme**



With EU funding of EUR 0.98 million, this project at the Estonia and Latvia border aims to showcase the industrial heritage of both countries by developing tourist routes through various old mills, hydroelectric power stations, factories, railways, lighthouses and even water towers. Industrial heritage as a source of tourism is not the norm in Latvia and Estonia. However, developing a common network of industrial heritage sites in both countries will diversify current tourism and attract more visitors to both regions.

**'Living Archives' financed by the 2014-2020 IPA cross border cooperation (CBC) Hungary-Serbia programme**



Working along the EU's external borders, the project is bringing together Hungary and Serbia to cooperate on the preservation of relics. Co-funded with EUR 0.17 million from the ERDF, it promotes synergies among researchers, archivists, ethnographers and anthropologists of both nationalities, protecting European heritage.

**'BLUEMED' funded by the 2014-2020 INTERREG VB Mediterranean programme**



With EUR 2.38 million from the ERDF, this project aims to plan, test and coordinate underwater museums, diving parks and knowledge-awareness centres to support sustainable and responsible tourism development and promote Blue growth in the coastal areas and islands of the Mediterranean.





## Macro-regional strategies (MRS) for cultural cooperation

The four MRS: EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Danube Region (EUSDR), Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), and the Alpine Region (EUSALP) support investments in culture via the relevant platforms. As a priority, they are already setting a political framework not only for Interreg programmes but also for national, regional and sectoral programmes as well as EU direct and private investments.

Because of their holistic approach, the MRS acknowledge a clear European dimension for cultural heritage which they address through different EU policies, such as regional and urban development, tourism, education and employment, maritime affairs, research and innovation.

In addition, their scope is being enlarged when it comes to cooperating with non-EU countries. This is the case for EUSAIR and EUSDR which have already developed projects with the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova. Furthermore, EUSBR and EUSALP have created synergies with the European Economic Area countries.

MRS **activate existing structures**, such as creative networks and cultural heritage platforms, to work together to develop processes, projects, exchange of best practices and peer-to-peer learning. For example, the EUSDR has facilitated the exchange of knowledge in the field of the 'adaptive reuse of heritage buildings' via the Danube Culture Platform – Creative Spaces of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century project<sup>2</sup>. The EUSBSR has set up a network to facilitate youth dialogue: Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, a platform for Start-ups and Technology Transfer in Innovation Ecosystems<sup>4</sup> was launched in the Alpine Region.

MRS also recognise the **direct and indirect social and economic potential** that cultural heritage can imply for EU regions, by financing the creative sectors and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises associated with sustainable and responsible tourism businesses. For example, the appointed officials from ministries of culture in the EUSAIR countries have identified the **EUSAIR olive trees route** as a best project relevant to the development of their region. This cultural route will be developed and accredited by the Council of Europe

within the framework of the EU-funded **Routes 4 U** project<sup>5</sup>, which aims at creating similar projects for all macro-regions and to promote them as **European destinations for the long-haul tourism markets**. Its scope is mainly to boost sustainable tourism SMEs, and smart entrepreneurship.

## EYCH 2018 and after ...

There is no doubt that the initiatives within the EYCH taken by the European Commission, notably DG REGIO and DG for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC), are meant to be intensified and continued in the coming years. In the post-2020 proposal for the European Structural and Investment Funds, cultural policy is open to investments, especially under Policy Objective 5: “**Europe closer to citizens by sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives**”. However, investments in creative industries can come under PO 1: “**A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformations**”, and PO 3: “**A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity**”.

MRS definitely support and facilitate cooperation among countries and regions in cultural and creative sectors. This reflects the strategic objectives of the **New European Agenda for Culture**<sup>6</sup>, published by the European Commission on 22 May 2018: a) harnessing the power of culture for social cohesion and well-being; b) Supporting culture-based creativity in education and innovation, and for jobs and growth; and c) strengthening international cultural relations.

DG REGIO is currently working with DG EAC on the upcoming European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage, and with DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) on innovative solutions relevant to the creative industries. ■

---

### FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/2A1MLbx>

---

2) <https://bit.ly/2UbMJph>

3) <http://www.cbss.org/regional-identity/baltic-sea-youth-dialogue/>

4) <https://bit.ly/2riEzys>

5) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/eu-jp-2017-20>

6) <https://bit.ly/2SttJBd>

Within the framework of the 2018 European Week of Regions and Cities, the Coop Cult and Succeed – EYCH 2018 workshop emphasised the synergies among the EU’s cultural, tourism, industrial and regional policies.

**MICHEL MAGNIER**



Director for Culture and Creativity (DG EAC) in charge of the EYCH 2018

*“2018 has set a good momentum for culture at the EU level and worldwide. The New European Agenda for Culture was launched in May 2018, followed by the European Action Plan for Cultural Heritage. In the first half of 2018, almost 6500 events were labelled EYCH 2018 across Europe and beyond, reaching almost 5 million participants.”*

**SLAWOMIR TOKARSKI**

Director for Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing (DG GROW)



*Slawomir Tokarski analysed the impact of industrial transformation in the field of culture and creative industries. “Culture links people and helps them to share common values. Successful EU value chains and cluster connections can create opportunities for cultural and creative sectors and, at the same time, foster the industrial transformation process.”*

**LENA ANDERSSON PENCH**



Director for European Territorial Cooperation, Macro-regions, Interreg and Programmes Implementation (DG REGIO)

*Lena Anderson Pench emphasised her point: “Interreg and the MRS promote culture and creativity with the view to creating jobs and growth.”*

**KAI HUOTARI**

Managing Director of Kaapelitehdas creative international hub, Finland’s largest cultural operator



*At Kaapeli, our mission statement is ‘culture makes life better’. Creative Lenses, our major cultural project, has taught us that crossing borders makes us stronger as cultural organisations.”*

**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](mailto:regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu) for further information on guidelines and deadlines.

## Cohesion Policy is vital for Poland's regions

**Polish regions' experience in European funds management is wide and unique in Europe. As part of two EU financial perspectives (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), Polish regions manage EUR 53 billion within the framework of regional operation programmes.**

Thanks to Structural Funds, Poland has made an impressive progress during this period, namely as regards GDP growth, higher employment rates and lower levels of social exclusion. Regions are aware that they owe their successful growth to the Cohesion Policy. Investing on the basis of long-term development has yet to be finished, which means that continuing and reinforcing a strong Cohesion Policy after 2021 is vital for Polish regions.

We have noted that the new proposal regarding the EU Multiannual Financial Framework seems somewhat disappointing, namely as far as Cohesion Policy is concerned. Although the EC has much proof, analyses and research confirming the pro-growth, pro-unanimous and counter-cyclical

character of this policy, it has proposed a significant reduction in the policy's financial dimension.

Representatives of all Polish regions met with the Director-General of DG REGIO, Marc Lemaître, in June 2018. They presented their feedback on the legislative package for Cohesion Policy after 2020. According to the Polish regions, the EC's proposal on this matter includes numerous positive elements, namely: 1. Focusing on promoting five key policy objectives, which makes the policy easier than it was in the financial prospective for 2014-2020; 2. Keeping a seven-year time horizon for the programming period; 3. Refraining from the process of designating institutions involved in project implementation; 4. Bringing flexibility into the transfer of appropriations between priorities in a given programme without the need for the EC's formal approval; and 5. A strong focus on support for territorial growth instruments.

However, there are certain drawbacks in the EC's proposal, including: 1. The unjustified proposal of reducing Cohesion Policy resources, which are responsible for key infrastructural projects in Europe and contribute widely to the acceleration of convergence of the weakest EU economies; 2. Cutting the scale of resources



**Tomasz Hanzel**  
Deputy Head of the Department  
for Coordination of Operational  
Programs, Opolskie Region, The South  
Poland House in Brussels

managed at the EC level, which is contrary to the idea of implementing Cohesion Policy closer to the citizens; 3. Failing to include the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the proposal for a general regulation, which will hamper coordinating the intervention of the ERDF, ESF, CF and EAFRD in rural areas; 4. Weakening the coordination between the ERDF and ESF (creation of the new European Social Fund, i.e. ESF+, and its exemption from certain provisions in the general regulation); and 5. A proposal to reduce the EU co-financing rate to 70% (for the least-developed regions), which in turn will hamper project implementation mainly by NGOs and local authorities. ■



**SOUTH  
POLAND  
HOUSE**  
IN BRUSSELS



# Finnish municipalities and regions reflect on Cohesion Policy

**The long-term objective of Cohesion Policy is to reduce territorial disparities, create sustainable growth and strengthen social inclusion. Cohesion Policy instruments have stimulated growth and increased employment and social cohesion both locally and regionally. Local and regional players play a key role in making the EU objectives tangible for citizens.**

For Finland, the most important financial instruments for achieving Cohesion Policy objectives have been the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). The latter is being reformed as ESF+ to merge a number of existing funds for the next programming period. In the future, local and regional levels should be given a bigger role in national implementation. The rules and implementation must be at the right level, respecting subsidiarity.

From the perspective of Finnish local and regional authorities, the programming work needs to be simpler and more flexible. It should be possible to review the focus and content of the programmes as the programming period progresses.

ESF+ should be implemented primarily under shared management, because that would give the Member States authority to choose the actions to be

funded. Finnish local authorities play a key role in advancing many of the actions funded under ESF+.

The link between the ERDF and the ESF – the two important funds for Finnish municipalities and regions – should be reinforced further and their central role in Cohesion Policy implementation maintained. Rural development and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development must not be forgotten in the national programme preparation, but should be closely coordinated with Structural Funds programming.

Regions and municipalities differ in many ways. It is good that the Commission will continue to offer a range of development tools in response to differing needs in the next programming period. The geographical themes central to Finnish municipalities and regions are the special circumstances of sparsely populated areas in the north, the potential of the Arctic, cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, and cross-border cooperation with Russia.

To respond to the handicaps caused by the challenging circumstances, new solutions are constantly sought in areas such as cold climate know-how, technology, energy and clean technology. Smart specialisation strategies will also play a key role in promoting regional growth and innovation across Finland in the future.

In Finland's view, it is important to take advantage of the synergies between the programmes and to combine different types of funding. In the new programming period, more efforts should be



**Ulla Karvo**  
Director Brussels Office,  
Association of Finnish Local  
and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)

focused on strengthening the link between the Structural Funds and EU research and innovation programmes.

Cross-border and transnational cooperation is important on both the internal and external borders. Finland's municipalities and regions need the maritime cross-border programmes in their current form because these Interreg programmes are strongly built around local and regional needs and networks. Maintaining cross-border cooperation with Russia is important for Finnish border municipalities and regions.

Even though Finland's receipts from Cohesion Funding are modest, they contribute substantially to the development resources for supporting local and regional vitality. ■

# Castilla-La Mancha considers the proposed Cohesion Policy reform



**Emiliano García-Page Sánchez**  
President of Castilla-La Mancha

**As the president of Castilla-La Mancha, I would like to thank *Panorama* for giving us the opportunity to share our views on the reform of the EU's Cohesion Policy and the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.**

On the one hand, Cohesion Policy harmonises the fundamental values of the EU and our regional government: namely, solidarity and the fight against inequality. On the other hand, however, we have grave concerns about the future of this policy, which has contributed so significantly to the growth of Castilla-La Mancha and the well-being of its citizens.

If I may say so, the substantial financial resources that have been received are just as important as the contribution the policy has made as a platform for

the exchange of experiences in the design and implementation of strategic policies, such as research, development and innovation, rural development, the environment, energy and many others.

The question we should be asking is whether the new budgetary scenario and the reforms proposed by the Commission adequately respond to the new challenges posed by less developed regions, such as Castilla-La Mancha? I am sorry to say that the answer is 'No'; at least, not to the extent needed in disadvantaged regions to bring about dramatic change and take advantage of the momentum of recovery.

We are facing reform that is chiaroscuro in nature. There are positive elements, such as the commitment to the strengthening of territorial cooperation, the focus on objectives, and the backing given to the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) strategy. However, the reforms have a darker side, too, such as the 6% cut in the budget allocation – a cut that is even more significant if we bear in mind the proposed 5% cut in the Common Agricultural Policy – or indeed the reduction in co-financing rates.

Cohesion Policy has served to counter-balance the austerity and divisive policies over the last decade. A considerable number of citizens have identified the EU as a friendly face of cohesion. Let us not take risks. Take only the resources and make only the changes that are strictly necessary.

It is in this context that some of the proposals from Castilla-La Mancha, reiterated in the heart of the European Committee of the Regions, are framing the inclusion of depopulation – as well as GDP per capita – as allocation criteria; the disregard for the co-financing of the Member States in the Structural Funds as a deficit; or greater coordination of this policy with sectoral policies (industry, environment, energy, etc.).

Reform of the Cohesion Policy presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its capacity as a strategic element for correcting territorial imbalances, serving as a brake to stop exclusionary populism, and for the EU to be held up as a workable model for globalisation. We need a policy with more cohesion and better cohesion, a policy that is strengthened and adapted to the needs and potential of the territories in question. ■



**Castilla-La Mancha**



# Creating synergies among Europe's cybersecurity valleys

Regions are uniquely positioned to raise the global level of cybersecurity thanks to a privileged connection with their local environments. Hence, they play a fundamental role in structuring the still 'young' European cybersecurity ecosystem. The EU already has many regions, or so-called 'cyber valleys', hosting mature regional ecosystems that foster innovation and deliver cutting-edge technologies.

The European Regional Development Fund has invested EUR 1.53 million in a five-year interregional cooperation programme entitled Interreg Europe CYBER. It aims to boost the competitiveness of EU cybersecurity SMEs by creating synergies among European cybersecurity valleys.

Three major barriers have been identified that are hindering interregional cooperation among EU regional cybersecurity ecosystems: a lack of coordination between relevant actors, a cybersecurity skills gap, and market fragmentation. CYBER aims to improve the sharing of good practices and public policies, while strengthening local cybersecurity ecosystems.

The Bretagne Development Innovation agency is the leading partner in CYBER. The project involves seven European regional partners, including the Institute for Business Competitiveness of Castilla y León (Spain), Tuscan Region (Italy), Digital Wallonia (Belgium), Brittany Region (France), Kosice IT Valley (Slovakia), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (Slovenia) and Estonian Information System Authority (Estonia).

As an advisory partner, the European Cyber Security Organisation (ECSO) brings to the project its expertise on regional cybersecurity industrial policies, acquired in its Working Group 4 focusing on 'support to SMEs and regional cooperation'.

## Enhancing public policies for SMEs

Interreg Europe CYBER methodology includes a common and market-driven taxonomy to develop a structured mapping of regional cyber innovative ecosystems. It comprises cybersecurity providers, end-users, support structures, training organisations and research institutes.

The project also aims to understand the inclusion of local players in the design and implementation of local cybersecurity strategies. To identify good practices and policy needs, project partners exchange information through tailored questionnaires and a high-level strategic planning model (SWOT analysis).

While already contributing to the development of the EU's digital single market, CYBER's long-term goal is to significantly reduce cybersecurity market fragmentation in Europe by increasing interregional cooperation across European cyber valleys. ■

---

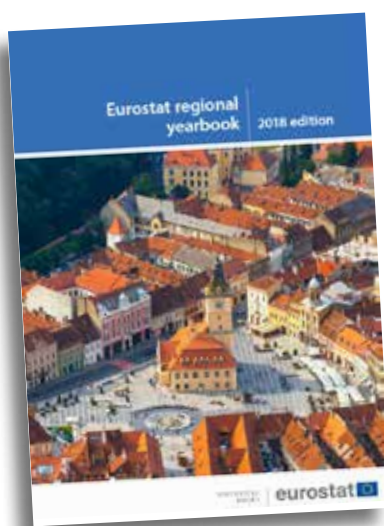
## FIND OUT MORE

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



# How is your region doing statistically?

To answer this question knowledgeably, you simply need to take a look at the latest version of the *Eurostat regional yearbook*. It hit the stands this autumn and features over 200 pages of statistics on Europe's regions presented in a clear and colourful layout.



The yearbook addresses the ever-increasing need to understand the life of European citizens. With three different levels of breakdown based on population criteria (Nomenclature of Territorial Units – NUTS 1, 2, 3), it enables the

reader to make a meaningful comparison of the political, economic and social situations of all the EU and, where possible, EFTA and candidate countries at the subnational level.

It is a reference for the perennially curious. The yearbook looks at Europe's regions in terms of population, health, education and training, labour market, economy, business statistics, research and innovation, digital economy, tourism, transport and agriculture.

The 2018 edition goes one step further with a chapter on Europe's cities as well as one on the different types of geographical classifications developed over the years.

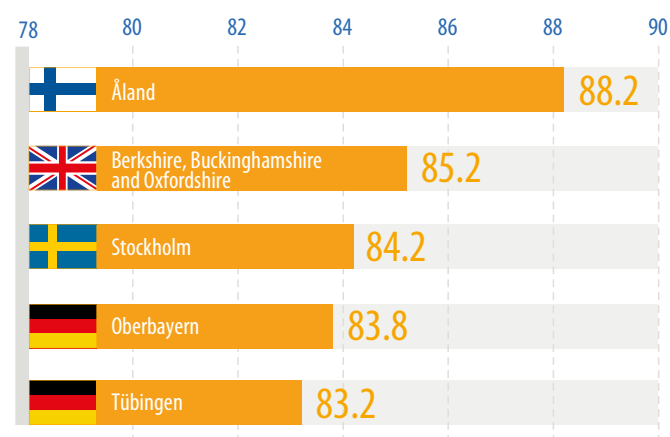
Each chapter opens with key findings and infographic rankings of the regions.

The infographic below shows that while the EU's employment rate stands at 72% – the highest ever recorded – the region of Åland in Finland, an archipelago province in the Baltic Sea, is top of the class with an employment rate of 88%.



## TOP 5 REGIONS IN THE EU

EMPLOYMENT RATE, 2017  
(% share of population aged 20-64)

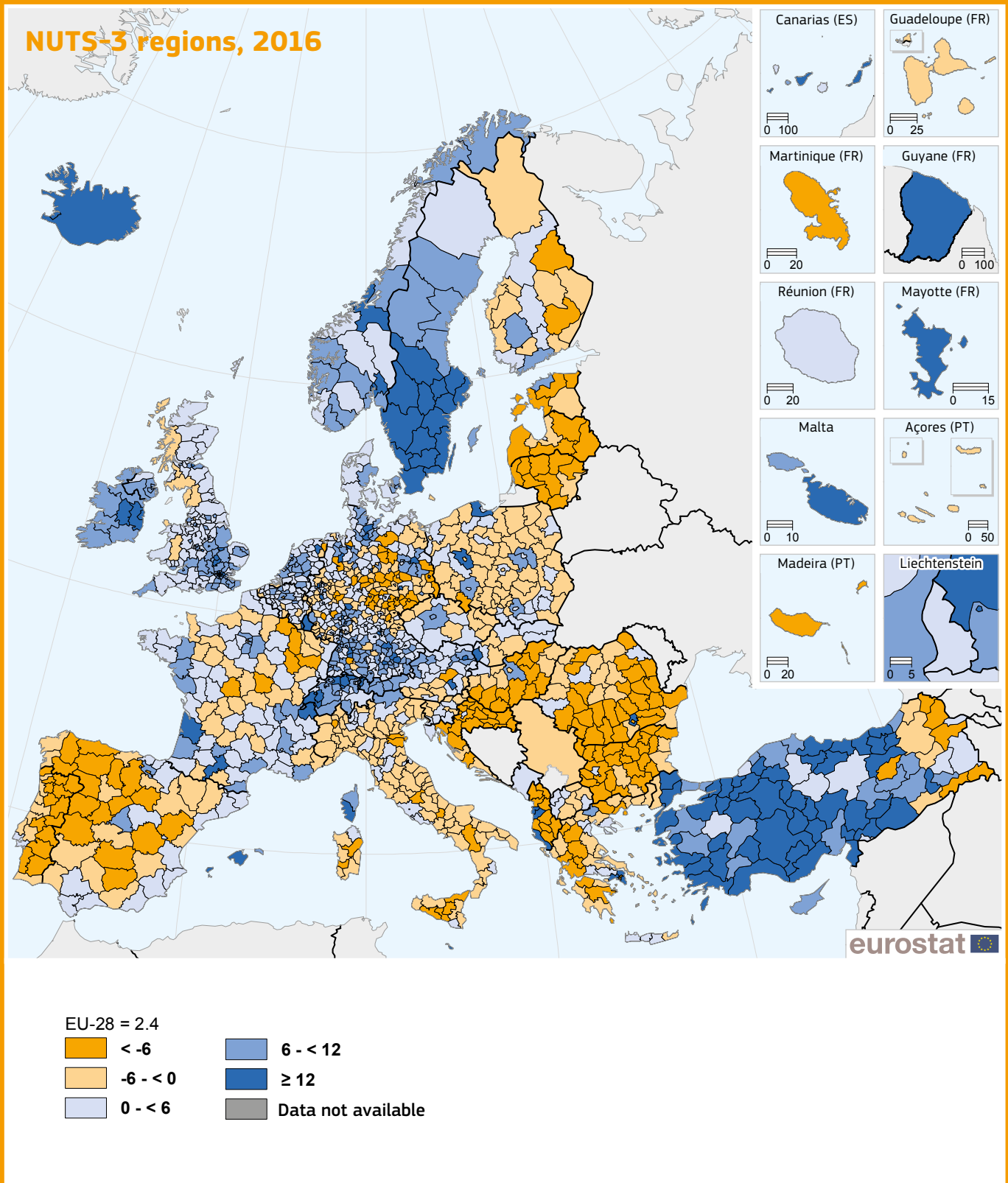


## Politics and planning

Regional data are not just available to satisfy the reader's curiosity or to gain an advantage in the local pub quiz. National and European policymaking depends on much of these data.

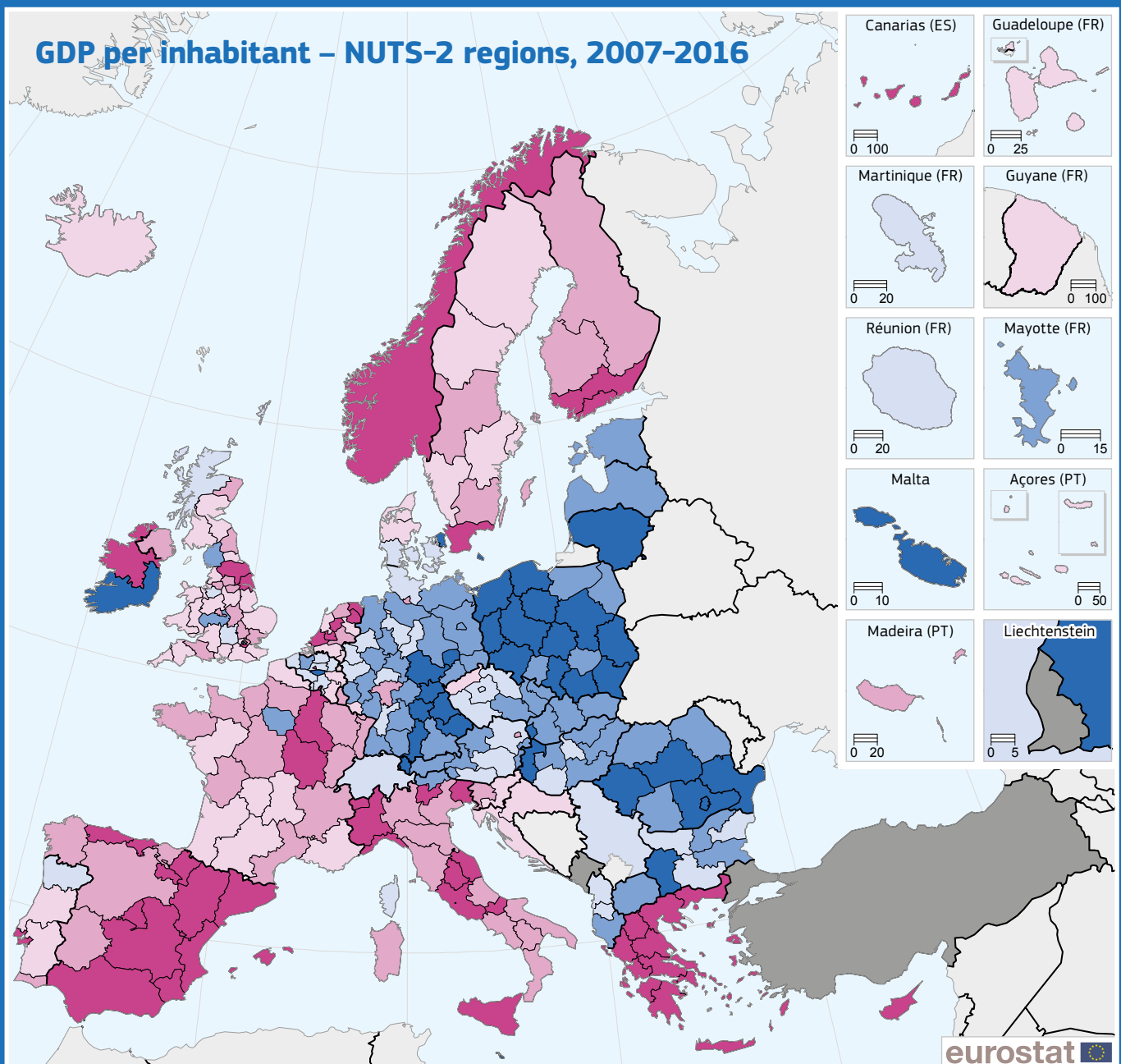
The EU's Cohesion Policy aims to reduce the disparities between EU regions. For example, if GDP per inhabitant is lower than 75% of the EU average, that region will be eligible for Cohesion Funding. This is where the breakdown into NUTS 2 regions becomes politically important.

# Crude rate\* of total population change



\* Crude rate of population change is the ratio of the total population change during the year to the average population of the area in question in that year. The value is expressed per 1 000 inhabitants.

# Change in gross domestic product



(percentage points difference for 2016 minus 2007; based on data in purchasing power standards (PPS) in relation to the EU-28 average, EU-28=100) EU-28 = 0



The data are also used in policies related to urban and rural development. The urban dimension is at the heart of Cohesion Policy and a special part of the budget is dedicated to promoting sustainable urban development in European cities. The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development helps development in rural areas by encouraging innovation while also protecting biodiversity and the natural environment.

Finally, local government decision-makers are also heavy users of data for NUTS-3 regions, which is a more detailed geographical level.

More information about the use of regional data for policy-making can be found in the yearbook.

## EU-wide teamwork

Eurostat does not produce such a comprehensive publication alone. It depends on many players across Europe.

Initially, discussions take place with Eurostat's statistical production units to gauge the 'hot topics' that should be treated in the yearbook. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy is consulted on the first chapter concerning the policy background. This year, it has also contributed to the last chapter, 'Focus on regional typologies'. Choosing the indicators to be included is daunting given the breadth and depth of the data available.

However, the yearbook would not be possible without the delivery of quality, timely data by the national statistical offices. The yearbook's editors wait until the very latest data are available before making the data extractions. All data are extracted as final on the same day.

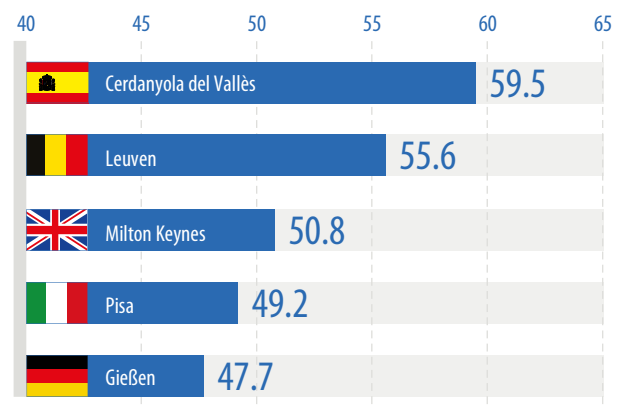
The data and chapter texts are then uploaded into 'Eurostat's wikipedia' – [Statistics Explained](#). This application is used as the content holder for most of Eurostat's publications, including the yearbook.

Fast forward to around four months later when the online and paper versions of the yearbook are published in mid-September, a few weeks before the annual European Week of Regions and Cities. Simultaneously, the online version is published in Statistics Explained, including ready-made tweets for the reader to use. The yearbook contains around 60 maps and is interspersed with many graphs and infographics.



## TOP 5 CITIES IN THE EU

TERTIARY STUDENTS, 2016 (per 100 inhabitants)



Other tools have evolved from the publication. Take a look at Eurostat's [interactive statistical atlas](#). Based on the same maps as in the yearbook, it covers a wealth of information. All maps can be extracted and reused free of charge.

Another source of in-depth information concerns the interactive maps and associated graphs in [Regions and Cities Illustrated](#). This tool is based on live data feeds – as new data comes in, they are automatically used by the application. The tool they also has an automated time-lapse function, showing how the situation has changed over the past 10 years.

Together with these tools, the Eurostat regional yearbook provides information for policymakers, citizens and businesses alike. ■

## FIND OUT MORE

Print copies can be ordered from the EU Bookshop:

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

Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

# Fighting Fraud & Corruption in EU-funded Projects – Lessons and Examples from the Member States

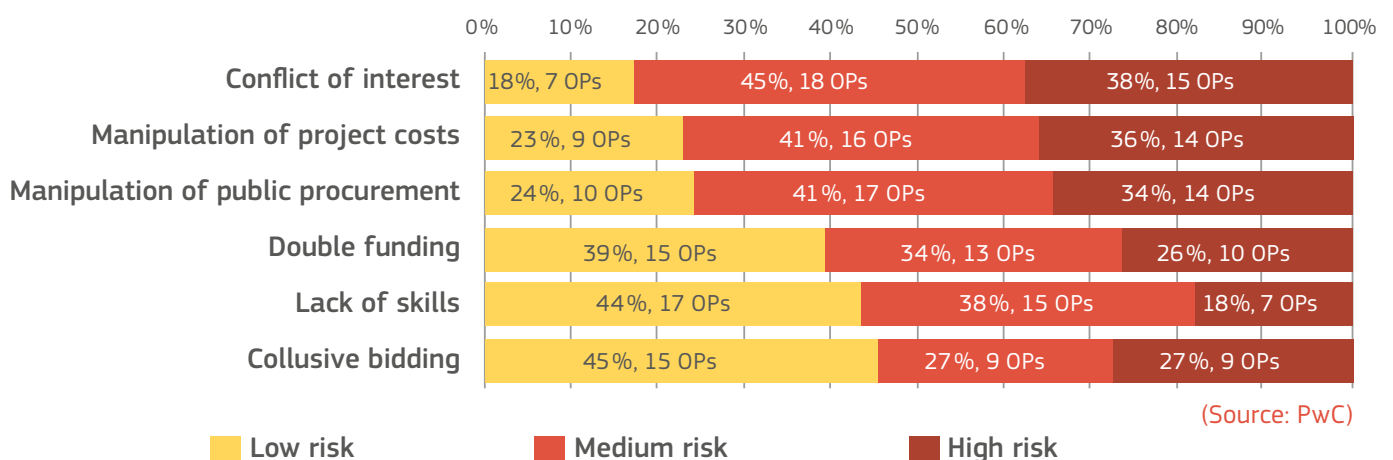
A new report from DG Regional and Urban Policy analyses the way the Member States and regions fight fraud and corruption in the spending of EU funds. It confirms that the new requirements have led to important improvements. The coordination and involvement of all relevant actors, as well as sharing information and good practice, are key elements for stepping up efforts to protect EU taxpayers’ money and ensuring good results for EU investment.

They play a key role in supporting business start-ups and helping people to secure better qualifications and new jobs. They help regions to innovate and plan growth and employment for the future. They foster the clean and efficient use of natural resources. They increase access to broadband and better mobility, especially in the less developed parts of the EU. For many Member States, these funds represent their main source of public investment.

This is why it is so vital that every eurocent is spent for the benefit of EU citizens, as an act of responsibility towards European taxpayers. Although for the period 2007-2013, based on Member State reporting, suspicions of fraud are estimated at 0.42 % of Cohesion Policy payments, the Commission shows zero tolerance and is fully committed to the fight against fraud and corruption involving EU funding.

In 2014-2020, under the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, more than EUR 460 billion in EU investments are helping Member States and regions to grow and to provide better living conditions for their citizens.

## Level of fraud risks across risk categories



It achieves this by ensuring that cases are investigated promptly and effectively and amounts of money unduly spent are clawed back. It is clear that this fight cannot be won without the cooperation of the Member States and their administrations, especially since responsibility for managing the funding is shared.

Combating fraud and corruption effectively requires not only corrective but also preventive actions. Important novelties in this regard were introduced in the legislative framework for ESI Funds 2014-2020. These included strengthening the audit trail of funds' operations and Member State accountability, and activities aimed at curbing fraud and corruption. In particular, Article 125(4)(c) of the Common Provisions Regulation requires that Managing Authorities put in place effective and proportionate anti-fraud measures, taking into account the risk identified.

## A measure of success

A recent report published by the Commission provides a useful overview of what has been done so far, identifies some existing practice examples and formulates a series of recommendations for both the Commission services and the national and regional authorities.

The stocktaking study covers all 28 Member States and is based on both document analysis and face-to-face interviews. Additional in-depth data were collected and digested for a selection of 50 Operational Programmes, representing a wide range of sectors and thematic objectives, covering transport infrastructure, environment, maritime and fisheries, education, competitiveness, and regional development.

One of the report's main findings is that the new legal provisions and measures have had a positive impact in terms of increasing awareness and more targeted actions. The requirements have led to a more formalised and more systematic approach to addressing the issue at national and regional level. An important example is the fraud-risk assessment process which has helped to put more focus on fraud and corruption risks, while creating clear links between identified risks and specific mitigating measures. Thanks to this, new controls have been introduced and the existing ones reinforced.

## Joining forces

At the same time, the report stresses further need for improvement when it comes to consistency, objectivity and proportionality of the assessment. In fact, authorities in Member States with moderate and low fraud-risk indicators tend to assess their risks as higher than countries with high risk indicators. Among the six categories of risk, collusive bidding and double funding require more proportional mitigating measures.

The involvement of various authorities, from those managing the EU funds to law-enforcement bodies, leads to enhanced coordination of anti-fraud activities and reduces fraud risks. All actors involved should make more and better use of the available tools and information, specific guidance, training and good practice examples.

The stocktaking study also prepared a compendium of practices identified by the consultants. It features samples of anti-fraud practices involving relevant measures developed at the regional, national and EU level. The compendium targets ESI Funds practitioners and policymakers who are exploring ways to improve their national management and control system or elements of it.

The fight against fraud and corruption is more than ever a common endeavour. The examples presented in the report show clearly that efforts should involve all levels and actors and must be well coordinated. Actions should be thoroughly planned, designed and implemented, taking into account careful and forward-looking analysis of the risks. This will become increasingly relevant in the future when, according to the Commission's legislative proposals for 2021-2027, the control will rely even more on national and regional authorities. These provisions will help to achieve the common objective of the most efficient and effective use of the funds for the benefit of citizens. ■

---

## FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/2G10fsY>



## DATA POINT

# Financial instruments to support Cohesion Policy objectives

**In December 2018, the Commission published its latest annual summary of data highlighting progress in implementing financial instruments (FIs) under the 2014-2020 programmes. Did you know that this was supported by an updated ESIF Open Data dataset?**

The latest reporting on the so-called 'FIs' shows good progress in the period 2014-2020. By the end of 2017, total contributions committed to FIs had reached nearly EUR 18.8 billion, involving 24 Member States and including EUR 14.2 billion of ESI Funds. This is a significant increase on the EUR 13.3 billion reported at the end of 2016.

By the end of 2017, the total volume of resources delivered through FIs had already exceeded that for the entire 2007-2013 period. In addition, EUR 5.5 billion had already been paid to FIs, 35 % of which had been distributed to final recipients.

The largest allocations to FIs are provided under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), with the European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Cohesion Fund (CF) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) also using this type of financing.

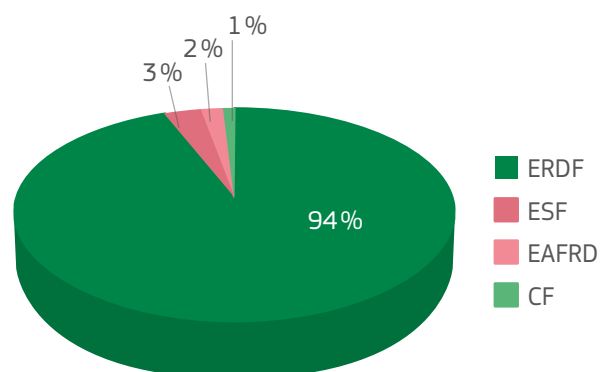
## 1. Who will be interested in the dataset?

The dataset will be of interest to a range of Cohesion Policy stakeholders and researchers. By the end of November 2018, nearly 900 users had viewed the dataset and 150 researchers and students had downloaded it.

The largest share of funding has been assigned to support small and medium-sized enterprises (56 %), followed by investments in the low-carbon economy (16 % – mainly in energy efficiency), research, development and innovation (16%), and employment, labour mobility and social inclusion (5%).

This data facilitates monitoring the use of EU and national financial resources allocated to FIs fund by fund. While the overall outlook is positive, there are significant differences across Member States in delivering these instruments. Some EU countries have yet to select financial intermediaries, while some FIs are already demonstrating concrete results in terms of leveraging resources returned for further investments, with the most advance already moving on to a second round of investments.

## ESIF amount committed to Financial Instruments (mEUR)



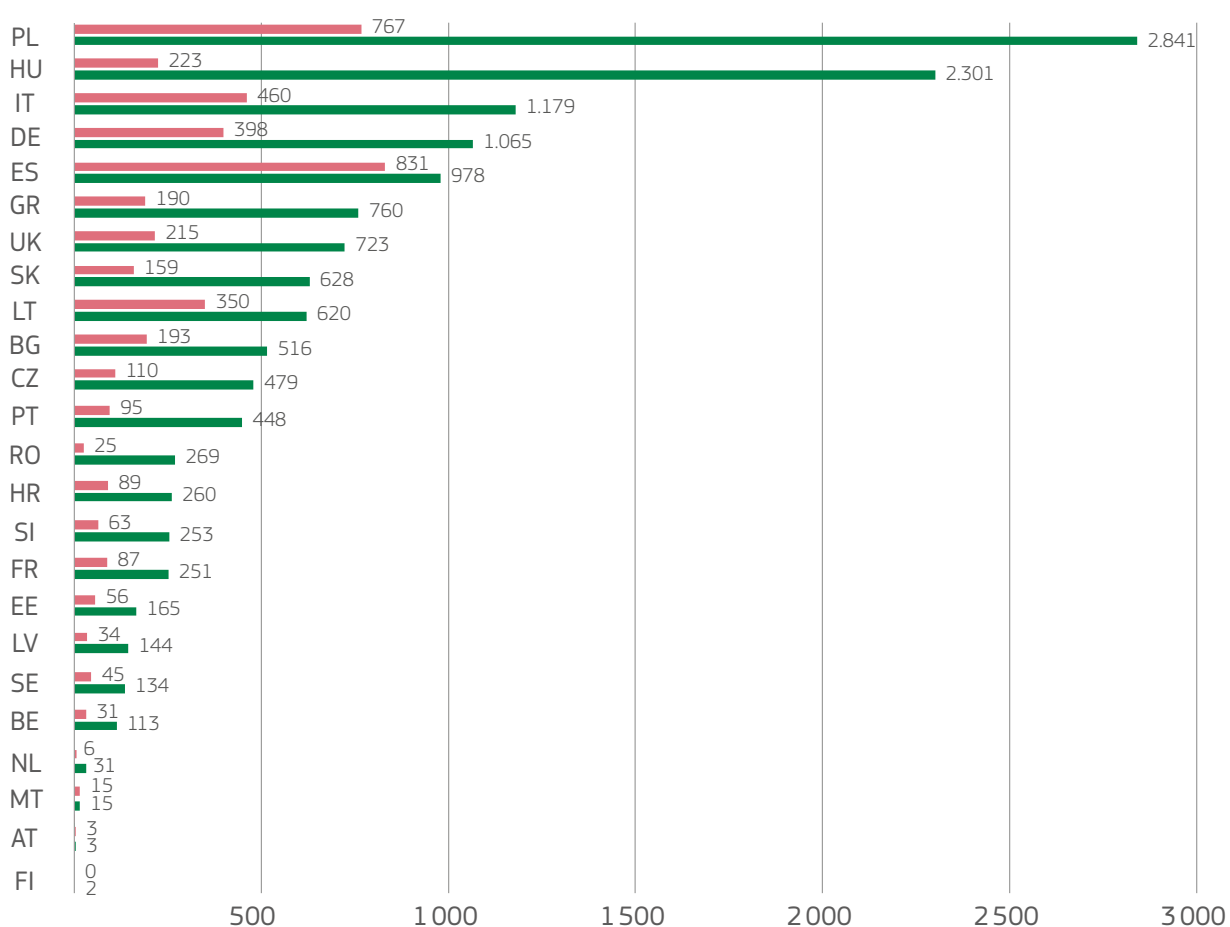
## 2. How was the data compiled?

In May/June each year, the programmes report to the Commission on each financial instrument. The Commission extracts the annual cumulative data and presents it in a harmonised form to enable comparison of implementation progress over the period. The Commission is working continuously with the programmes to improve the quality of the data reported. The dataset is updated regularly to reflect corrections or modifications.

## EXPLORE THE DATA ON THE ESIF OPEN DATA PLATFORM:

<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/d/dcsc-7x87>

## ESIF 2014-2020 - EU amount committed and paid to Financial Instruments - end 2017



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

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

If so, please e-mail: [REGIO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu](mailto:REGIO-EVAL@ec.europa.eu)

Follow the discussion on TWITTER [#ESIFOpenData](https://twitter.com/ESIFOpenData)

or subscribe to our newsletter: [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/index.cfm?service\\_id=788](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/index.cfm?service_id=788)



# Saving the Danube sturgeon: the ICPDR Sturgeon Strategy

Sturgeons are a unique species of fish whose origins can be traced back over 200 million years. Having undergone considerably little morphological change in that time, they are a remarkable evolutionary success story. Today, sturgeons are one of the most endangered species in the world as a result of human activities.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, over 85% of sturgeon species are classified as being at risk of extinction, making them one of the most critically endangered group of species worldwide. The most serious threats to their survival include over-exploitation, poaching, dams blocking their natural migration routes, loss or degradation of habitats and pollution.

Sturgeons are valuable indicators of a healthy river environment. The International Commission for the Protection of the River Danube (ICPDR) has long recognised their importance and has adopted sturgeons native to the Danube as its flagship species. It has developed a strategy to raise awareness of the sturgeon's plight; promote existing and future projects, initiatives and EU Directives to enhance environmental conditions for the sturgeon; and develop specific solutions to the specific problems sturgeons face.

In 2012, the Danube Sturgeon Task force was developed by the ICPDR and a network of national and international public entities, NGOs and academic institutions with these objectives in mind. It has since been striving to achieve the current

strategy's objectives by promoting the 'Sturgeon 2020' programme. The ICPDR has just signed a grant agreement with DG REGIO to implement a feasibility study on fish migration options at the Iron Gate Dam between Romania and Serbia, a major obstacle on their route upstream.

Other key measures in Sturgeon 2020 include setting up a pilot *ex-situ* facility for migratory species and *in-situ* monitoring of habitats and population behaviour along the Danube and its major tributaries. Cooperation with contracting fish farms will facilitate the creation of an inventory of captive sturgeons. ■

---

## FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.icpdr.org/main/activities-projects/sturgeons-danube-basin>





PROJECTS

# DANISH SMES SERVED UP SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**TOTAL INVESTMENT  
EUR 3900000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION  
EUR 2000000**

**In an effort to help Denmark's food industry small and medium-sized enterprises overcome barriers to their growth and development, an EU-funded project has come up with an appetising strategy.**

The 'Thriving culinary experiences' project is being organised and run by the Business Development Centre in Southern Denmark, a region with no common cuisine but home to a wide variety of culinary backgrounds and specialities.

The ongoing four-year project is targeting four main areas for improvements in the food business: quality, internationalisation, sustainability and productivity.

The first task has been looking into how SMEs can be sure that the ingredients they source and the products they develop are of high quality. The internationalisation aspect is encouraging businesses to export their goods to countries around Europe, while the focus on sustainability aims to encourage a greater emphasis on organic foods to promote a better ecological footprint and a more sustainable environment.

A better strategy for improving productivity is covered by the fourth project goal, which includes finding more efficient and smarter solutions for the companies to do business effectively and maximise their sales. Initiatives such as linking local food with storytelling and asking restaurant owners to provide customers with value-added information about their meal are intended to give consumers a more unique and authentic eating experience.

## Recipe for success

The non-profit Centre organises workshops and learning retreats, where participants can discuss the common challenges they face in the region. It has also devised a screening process to identify suitable businesses to participate in the project: of the 160 SMEs considered, 70 were selected.

The Centre's consultants have been assigned to the companies selected and have allocated subsidies for their specialised business plans, ranging from 15% to 50% of their costs depending on the size of the SME and the proposed strategy. It is hoped that the success of the participating SMEs will inspire other small companies to focus on developing their own business strategy which, in turn, will boost growth across the region.

Thanks to a contribution from the European Regional Development Fund, the project is currently working with 31 SMEs. In the long term, it is expected to help 70 small businesses generate EUR 20 million in revenue and to create 99 jobs. ■

---

## FIND OUT MORE

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

## PROJECTS

# GREECE AND ITALY JOIN FORCES TO PREVENT WILDFIRES

**TOTAL INVESTMENT  
EUR 1 300 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION  
EUR 975 000**

The OFIDIA project, a collaboration between Italy's Apulia region and the Epirus region in north-west Greece, built a cross-border fire prevention infrastructure based on computer-generated forecasting models.

The cross-border area of Italy and Greece is ecologically diverse, with mountains, coastline and dense hardwood forests. As a result of hot temperatures, drought, negligence and arson, the area is ravaged by wildfires every year. Such blazes spread fast and are difficult to contain.

According to OFIDIA researchers, the keys to successfully containing a forest fire are early detection, accurately predicting weather conditions, coordinating ground and aerial firefighting operations and conducting forensic analysis of the causes and damage done. However, this is not always easy, especially in remote forests of Italy and Greece where fire watchtowers and firefighting crews remain unstaffed due to budget constraints.

Furthermore, firefighters in the field need easy access to detailed weather forecasts, along with live visual data from the operational area. Yet, also because of budget constraints, the control room of the Ioannina Regional Fire Corps Unit only has a wireless voice link to the team and lacks any visual or digital data about the area.

## Turning towards technology

OFIDIA researchers used technology to fill this resource gap. To provide early detection, the system installed automated visual and thermal camera equipment throughout the forested area. This equipment wirelessly transmits information to one of five state-of-the-art central control rooms that the project established in Lecce, Brindisi, Bari and Ioannina, which then use it to coordinate their individual firefighting operations.

The project also developed an ICT infrastructure that provides online geographical maps with advanced weather forecasts, fire danger indices, and historical information about weather sensors, forecast data, and forest fire incidents. This information allows stakeholders to prepare their operational activities more effectively, ultimately resulting in a reduction in the number of annual wildfires and a subsequent rehabilitation of the natural habitat.

The OFIDIA system not only helps protect the region's forests from wildfires, it also helps create a sustainable quality of life and economic prosperity in the cross-border region.

For example, the detailed weather forecasts generated by the system are made available to the public and can be used to better plan activities and protect against extreme weather conditions. The project has also encouraged closer collaboration between Italian and Greek civil protection authorities, along with more effective scientific cooperation between the area's research institutions – all to the benefit of the general population. ■

## FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVvF9IC-Z2c>





PROJECTS

# INNOVATIVE RECYCLING PUTS END-OF-LIFE FABRICS BACK ON TRACK

**TOTAL INVESTMENT  
EUR 4480000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION  
EUR 1905000**

**Thanks to a contribution from the EU Cohesion Fund, a recycling facility in Krajné, western Slovakia is turning waste textiles into innovative green products for use in the construction and transport sectors.**

Following the expansion and modification of its production facilities, the company PR Krajné has developed a unique technology for processing waste synthetic textiles to create greener, environmentally friendly products.

The company is using STERED, its proprietary patented technique, to recycle carpets and upholstery from end-of-life vehicles, offcuts from new car production and pulp from recycled tyres. The process benefits from the moisture- and wear-resistant and low-flammability characteristics of the synthetic fabrics used in the automotive industry which, because of their durability, also makes them difficult to dispose of.

The end product is the STERED building block that boasts acoustic and thermal insulating properties and water-retention capabilities. Their ability to retain water and withstand weather conditions in all seasons makes the blocks ideal as a base for green roofs, which also allow for the growth of grass and other plants.

Besides providing excellent insulation and helping to reduce energy bills, the product is now being used with photovoltaic panels to promote renewable energy, in line with European standards for energy efficiency.

## **Making urban spaces greener**

The water-retention and sound-suppression properties also make STERED products suitable for new tramway tracks. Sections of green track absorb then slowly release rainwater through evaporation, which cools and humidifies the air, reducing noise and dust for local residents and improving the urban environment overall. Similarly, the blocks are now being used in the construction of noise barriers for road and rail infrastructure.

The plant went into operation in 2012, and by 2017 had processed more than 1780 tonnes of automotive textiles. With demand growing, it is expected to recycle 700 tonnes of material this year, increasing to 1750 tonnes in 2019.

In 2018, the EU's Cohesion Fund has contributed towards the employment of 41 people in PR Krajné, with the potential for a further 25 jobs in the coming year. ■

---

## **FIND OUT MORE**

<http://www.stered.sk/?lang=en>



## PROJECTS

# HEALTHY OUTLOOK FOR PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION IN POLAND

**TOTAL INVESTMENT  
EUR 2 300 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION  
EUR 855 000**

**An innovative production process has helped a drug manufacturer in Poland's Warmińsko-Mazurskie region to develop new products and become more competitive in the country's pharmaceutical sector.**

In what is a first for drug manufacturers in this Polish region, the fully automated production machinery is producing and packaging affordable versions of popular generic painkiller tablets and gels. Thanks in part to funding from the Regional European Development Fund, the Laboratory Galena Olsztyn (LGO) collaborated with the University of Warmia and Mazury in the region's capital, Olsztyn, to develop and provide the machinery for the automated production lines.

The equipment used to produce the tablets includes a docking station for loading ingredients, a powder mixer, a tablet press and coater, and automatic blister packaging and boxing machines. The line currently produces the LOG's own 500 mg paracetamol and 400 and 200 mg ibuprofen painkillers which have proved popular with local consumers as they are available without prescription and are cheaper than the original brands.

A second production line – which incorporates mixing, tube-filling and boxing machines – produces skin-applied ketoprofen and diclofenac anti-inflammatory gels to relieve internal pain. All the medicines are based on existing formulations for which the patents had expired. Consequently, the LGO has been able to avoid research costs while increasing its income by around 30%.

## Keeping tight control

All the equipment is fully computerised, enabling the lab workers to closely monitor the production process and to save energy compared to the non-automated manufacturing of similar medicines.

In order to meet the demanding EU standards, the two new lines of over-the-counter generic drugs produced by the LGO must be certified by Poland's Main Pharmaceutical Inspectorate. To achieve this, the laboratory maintains an inspection system across all the stages of manufacturing, from raw materials to production and packaging.

Previously installed hygiene measures ensure that the drugs are kept free of germs. The workers must wear protective clothing and enter the production area through gas-tight sluices, and the air in the production area and for the machines is constantly filtered.

To date, the innovative automated lines have created 20 new jobs for workers who also receive full training from laboratory staff to operate in the LGO's production area. ■

---

## FIND OUT MORE

<http://bip2.warmia.mazury.pl>

# AGENDA

## 7 MARCH

Brussels (BE)

### High-level event: Women in Public Administration

## 22-23 MAY

Bucharest (RO)

### Interreg Annual Conference

## 20-21 JUNE

Bucharest (RO)

### 'Investing in our Shared Future: the 8th Conference for the Evaluation of EU Cohesion Policy'

## 7-10 OCTOBER

Brussels (BE)

### European Week of Regions and Cities

#### LEGAL NOTICE

Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on behalf of the European Commission is responsible for the use that might be made of the following information.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018

Print: ISSN 1608-389X KN-LR-18-067-EN-C

PDF: ISSN 1725-8308 KN-LR-18-067-EN-N

© European Union, 2018

Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

The reuse policy of European Commission documents is regulated by Decision 2011/833/EU (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39).

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EU copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.

Printed in Belgium

This magazine is printed in English, French, German, Bulgarian, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Polish and Romanian on recycled paper. It is available online in 22 languages at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/panorama-magazine/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/panorama-magazine/)

The content of this issue was finalised September 2018.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS (PAGES):

Cover : © iStock/Meinzahn; Bilbao © iStock/LucVi; RegioStars © European Union; EYCH © European Union;

Page 3: © European Union;

Page 4: © European Union;

Page 5: © Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism, Margit Schörg;

Page 6: © European Union;

Page 7: © European Union;

Page 10: Antwerp © iStock/Argalis; Bilbao © iStock/LucVi; © iStock/Settantasette;

Page 11: Maribor © iStock/mura; Lahti © iStock/DarthArt; Göteborg © iStock/mura;

Page 12: © iStock/Meinzahn;

Page 14: © iStock/SocjosensPG;

Page 18: © European Union;

Page 20: © European Union;

Page 21: © European Union;

Page 22: © European Union;

Page 23: © European Union;

Page 24: Regiostars ceremony © European Union; © Business and Shared Services Centre; © VTT Finland;

Page 25: © Statutory City of Ostrava - © iStock/FatCamera - © Nant Gwtheyrn; © Vista Alegre Heritage Museum;

Page 26: © European Union;

Page 27: © European Union;

Page 28: © Anina Vontavon;

Page 29: © iStock/kyneshner;

Page 30: © Iskra Tsankova ;

Page 31: © Aurore Dessaigne ;

Page 32: © European Union; © Martín Guillermo Ramírez © AEBR ;

Page 33: © Diana Zsoldos ;

Page 34: © European Union;

Page 38: © European Union;

Page 41: © European Union/Geert VandenWijnngaert;

Page 42: © South Poland House;

Page 43: © Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities;

Page 44: © Castilla-La Mancha;

Page 45: © iStock/weerapatkiatdumrong;

Page 54: © iStock/wrangle;

Page 55: © Thriving culinary experiences' project;

Page 56: © iStock/mrak\_hr;

Page 57: © Juraj Plesnik;

Page 58: © iStock/xfzsy.

## STAY CONNECTED



[ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy)  
[cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu](http://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu)



[@EUinmyRegion](https://twitter.com/EUinmyRegion)



[EUinmyRegion](https://www.facebook.com/EUinmyRegion)



[flickr.com/euregional](https://www.flickr.com/euregional)



[EUinmyRegion](https://www.youtube.com/EUinmyRegion)



[euinmyregion](https://www.instagram.com/euinmyregion)



[ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/cretu\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/cretu_en)  
[@CorinaCretuEU](https://twitter.com/CorinaCretuEU)



Publications Office

European Commission  
 Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy  
 Communication – Agnès Monfret  
 Avenue de Beaulieu/Beaulieuilaan 1 – B-1160 Bruxelles/Brussel  
 E-mail: [regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu)