



PANORAMA

Focusing on European Regional and Urban Policy

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Moravia-Silesia emerges from its industrial past

INTERREG'S SPIRIT
OF COOPERATION



PLANNING
AHEAD THROUGH
INDUSTRIAL
TRANSITION



Regional and
Urban Policy

PANORAMA

In this issue ...

The summer issue of *Panorama* magazine covers a wide range of topics and features a final, farewell editorial from our departing Commissioner Corina Crețu.

Our regional focus this time is on Moravia-Silesia in Czechia, with an interview with Regional President Ivo Vondrák, project examples, and an analysis of how they are dealing with the transition away from the coal industry towards a more climate-neutral economy. We also take a close look at trans-national cooperation via the Interreg programme, featuring best practice and projects from across the continent, and how the EU Competency Framework enables effective management of EU funds.

In our In Your Own Words section we have reflections from two MEPs on the REGI committee – Constanze Krehl and Jan Olbrycht – and we also hear from younger people via their experiences in the Youth4Regions media programme.

We find out how the Broadband Competence Offices Network is helping to narrow the digital divide between regions, and how interregional cooperation helps enhance cybersecurity. The projects section visits Cyprus, France, the Canaries and the Italy/Austria border region.

Happy reading!



AGNÈS MONFRET

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



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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

By the time you read these words, I will have stepped down as Commissioner for Regional Policy. Nevertheless, I wanted to take the opportunity of this quarterly appointment with you to tell you how honoured I have been to serve Cohesion Policy.

When the Juncker Commission started working in November 2014, European citizens clearly expected the Union to deliver on a number of tough challenges: recovering from the economic crisis, stabilising the euro, and preparing the EU for the Paris Agreement on climate change, to name but a few. And this is exactly what we have strived to do, with the Investment Plan for Europe, setting up the Energy Union and the Digital Single Market and, of course, with Cohesion Policy investments.

The latest figures show that one euro of Cohesion Policy investment made five years ago will generate nearly three euros of additional gross domestic product in five years' time. This telling example is self-explanatory, but the impact of Cohesion Policy goes way beyond figures.

For almost five years, I have had the chance to visit hundreds of regions across the Union and to meet all those committed people who manage and implement thousands of EU projects on the ground. This unique experience has confirmed my belief that Cohesion Policy is and will continue to be instrumental in improving the daily life of European citizens. It has channelled funds into hospitals, schools, transport, rural areas, cities, cross-border regions and remote islands. As the main EU investment policy, it has contributed to weaving the social, economic and cultural fabric that holds us all together.

And to further enhance the impact of Cohesion Policy, several key initiatives have been launched under my mandate. I have in mind the Task Force for Better Implementation, which

helped many Member States make more efficient use of the remaining funds from the 2007-2013 period; the High Level Group on Simplification, to make European Structural and Investment Funds rules much easier for the beneficiaries; our call to Member States in 2015 to redirect some of their Cohesion Policy allocation to tackle the migration and refugee crisis; and the two pilot initiatives on catching-up regions and coal regions in transition, to support them in their economic transformation and help them better harness globalisation and technological change.

It is quite evident that Cohesion Policy is the most vivid expression of European solidarity. This is why, during the preparation of the Commission's proposals for the 2021-2027 programming period, alongside all Cohesion Policy supporters, I vigorously advocated for a policy that would remain in all regions. And we have succeeded: no region, no citizen will be left behind.

Of course, Cohesion Policy could not bring tangible results on the ground without the support of all local and regional authorities, Member States, civil society, communities, project managers and beneficiaries. This involvement mirrors its very essence: partnership and mutual trust. The coming decade will bring many new challenges and we will have to stick together to take them up. As for me, I will continue, throughout my work, to champion the values of cohesion and solidarity, so rest assured that our paths will cross again under the auspices of our European project. ■



Corina Crețu
European Commissioner for Regional Policy



Inspiring industrial transition in all regions

Faced with globalisation, rapid technological change and the necessary shift to a low-carbon economy, the EU is working on a series of regional pilot schemes to find new ways to spread the benefits fairly and ensure industrial transition works for everyone, wherever they live.

Globalisation, new technology and efforts to combat climate change are radically and rapidly reshaping the way in which we live and work. These changes bring with them a number of opportunities. The challenge for the European Union is to ensure that all citizens in all regions benefit from those opportunities and can better prepare themselves for the communities and workplaces of the future.

While some regions are struggling economically and others are enjoying success, a number find themselves stuck in the middle. They may have high-ranking companies, strong universities and a proud industrial heritage, but many of their traditional firms and workers are finding it difficult to keep up with the pace of technological change and shifting production patterns.

Achieving a successful EU-wide industrial transition that leaves none of these people and businesses behind requires substantial investment in manufacturing, training, research

and innovation, coupled with profound systemic transformations. That is why the European Commission has launched a series of pilot schemes which it hopes will provide valuable lessons on how to ensure industrial transition works for everyone.

‘These economic transformation strategies must make sure future economic success built on innovation does not benefit only the few,’ says Peter Berkowitz, Head of Unit for Smart and Sustainable Growth at DG REGIO. ‘It is simply not good enough to have core urban centres running full steam ahead but leaving surrounding small towns and rural areas behind.’

Activating potential

Europe faces five broad, connected challenges in addressing the issue of industrial transition: preparing workers and firms for the jobs of the future; helping firms across the economy exploit new ideas and make use of the latest technologies; ensuring the transition of regions to a low-carbon economy; promoting entrepreneurship and new types of firms; and encouraging the use of new technologies and work patterns to promote social inclusion.

Many regions with a history of carbon-intensive industries are still dealing with the heritage of the decline of traditional sectors. At the same time, they are confronted with adapting

to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution with its complex, digital and customised systems.

Europe needs to strengthen the ability of such regions to modernise and innovate by facilitating investment in new technology and embracing the changes brought on by digitalisation and the move to a low-carbon economy.

Cohesion Policy is the main EU policy instrument for addressing structural changes linked to energy and industrial transition. For the 2014-2020 programme period, 30% of funding, or EUR 120 billion, was allocated to help regions become more competitive and activate their innovation potential, in the context of tailored smart specialisation strategies that help regions diversify their economies and create jobs based on their respective strengths.

However, as funding alone is not enough, the European Commission's three pilot actions aim to capitalise on Europe's strengths: its diversity, dynamism, and the willingness to test new approaches at the local, regional and national level.

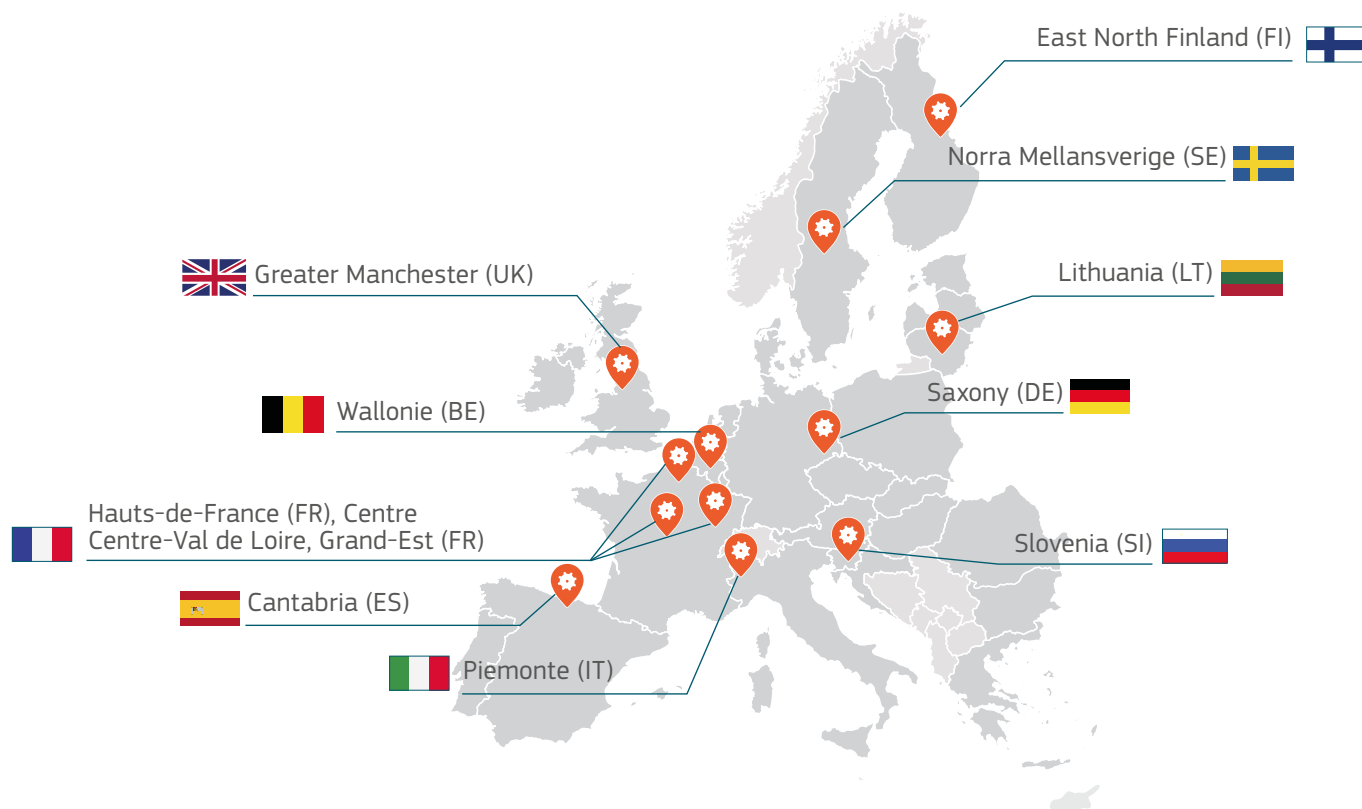
Living labs

The **Regions in Industrial Transition** pilot action was launched in 2018 to help regions develop new approaches to strengthening growth and productivity in the face of industrial transition. Ten regions and two Member States are working with specialists from the Commission to boost their innovation capacity, remove investment barriers, equip workers with the right skills and prepare for industrial and societal change. The pilot aims to develop targeted policy tools to address these challenges.

In the first phase, teams analysed existing policy instruments and identified challenges specific to each region, with the help of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the Commission. On this basis, each of the 10 regions and two Member States have been allocated EUR 300 000 to trial a new approach to industrial transition and test a policy response to one or several challenges identified during the workshops.



The regions in industrial transition



‘It will be a kind of living lab, where each region will try to find new solutions to difficult problems,’ says Berkowitz. ‘They will receive a grant to run this pilot and we will work closely with them to draw the lessons learnt, so that other regions and cities can benefit. We are convinced in DG REGIO that Europe’s diversity is its great strength and we need to encourage more experimentation.’

There is a clear need to support traditional businesses as well as start-up companies, he points out. Smaller and older firms often have limited capacity to adopt and exploit new technologies, in particular where the local workforce does not have the relevant skills, training and education. Addressing this challenge calls for stronger links between entrepreneurship, higher education and vocational training policies.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the French region of Centre-Val de Loire, for example, are faced with ongoing skill mismatches and difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified staff. Through a specialised recruitment network set up as part of this pilot scheme, the region will aim to work directly with SMEs to define their recruitment needs, provide coaching and support human resource strategies. The objective is to improve staff management, better anticipate industrial transition challenges and exploit the technologies that are changing the nature of industrial jobs.

Regions need to create and promote open innovation systems and develop financial mechanisms for smaller firms, with

incentives for innovative product-driven activities. In East North Finland, local SMEs will test a cross-regional voucher system that allows them to buy services to foster their innovation capacities and strengthen their participation in the agro-forestry sector. The scheme will target projects in which companies develop joint investment projects with research and technology organisations and deploy innovation in the sector while addressing the circular economy.

Protecting communities

The second pilot project, **Coal Regions in Transition**, focuses on former mining regions. As part of the transition to a carbon-neutral economy in the EU, coal production and consumption are declining – this shift brings with it a number of societal and economic challenges. Approximately 185 000 Europeans are still directly employed in active coal-mining operations in 41 regions in 12 EU countries. Another estimated 53 000 work in coal-fired power plants. Without long-term planning for their future, the transition for these people is likely to be difficult. Regions formerly dependent on coal can suffer from decades of structural unemployment as the industry declines, with significant impacts on communities and public finances.

While the transformation to a carbon-neutral economy should have an overall positive impact for the EU, policy-makers recognise that it also has the potential to increase social and regional disparities. In an attempt to combat this,



the Commission's objective with this pilot scheme is to help coal- and carbon-intense regions plan for the structural changes related to energy transition and to anticipate negative socio-economic impacts.

Teams of Commission experts are providing support to 18 pilot regions across eight Member States, while a European-level platform gathers stakeholders, provides access to technical support and capacity building, and enables coal regions to share their experience with local and national representatives, social partners, industry and civil society.

These teams are working with regional and national authorities to develop solutions that will speed up the process of diversification and technological transition. They also advise regional authorities on accessing funding, implementing smart specialisation strategies, driving innovative businesses and putting in place decarbonisation strategies. Financial support is available for investments that contribute to growth and job creation, such as innovation, clean energy transition and social inclusion.

Investing in innovation

The third and final pilot programme is **Creating New Value Chains Through Interregional Investment in Innovation**. To benefit from a globalised economy, European regions and cities need to take full advantage of the possibility to scale up innovative technologies and new businesses in the Single Market. This means bringing together firms, researchers and public authorities from across the EU to work on developing smart specialisation priority areas, to match their competitive strengths and develop innovative programmes.

The Commission launched a call in 2017, from which it selected nine interregional partnerships that are now testing new approaches to building these value chains. The partnerships have been supported by teams within the Commission, involving experts in a variety of areas. Each partnership also receives external advisory services worth up to EUR 200 000 for scale-up and commercialisation activities from the European Regional Development Fund. Dozens of regions have proposed ideas that will feed into investment projects to be developed in areas including the bioeconomy, cybersecurity, 3D printing and marine renewable energy.



Planting the seeds

Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 will allow Member States and regions to support industrial transition in a comprehensive and flexible way as part of the next generation of smart specialisation strategies. It will require new ways of working for regions and cities, a shift in thinking, and a greater capacity to develop and implement solutions to ensure no region is left behind. There is an urgent need, therefore, to bring together all stakeholders and their knowledge, build on the experience of the pilot actions and ensure the thorough spreading of good practices across the whole of the EU.

'We are planting seeds at a local level on which a sustainable and inclusive Europe should grow,' says Berkowitz. 'Regions, cities and SMEs are where everything starts, economically of course, but also socially and, yes, politically. All these threads are intertwined, and our action needs to touch things that are important in people's daily lives, wherever they live.' ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!pG78Wk>



Better competencies for better governance of EU funds

How can you assess the professional, operational or managerial competencies your institution needs for the more efficient and effective management of EU funds? How can you establish a plan to develop such competencies? The EU Competency Framework provides an answer to both questions.

All public institutions involved in managing the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund – the national coordinating bodies, managing, audit and certifying authorities, joint secretariats and intermediate bodies – can use the EU Competency Framework to identify and address competency gaps and adapt their training strategies.

The tool, developed by the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), comprises:

- › **an EU Competency Framework** which includes a set of competencies administrations and officials should have; and
- › **a web-based self-assessment tool** enabling employees to rate their proficiency level for each competency required for their job-specific profile. This will help to define future development objectives.

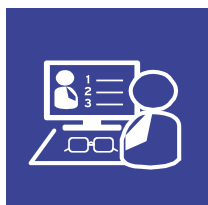
Public officials can use the tool to assess their knowledge and competencies while being guided by an intuitive scoring system. In this way, it helps the organisation and its members to gain awareness of its own strengths and weaknesses.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL IDENTIFIES COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS



The employee assesses his/her competencies



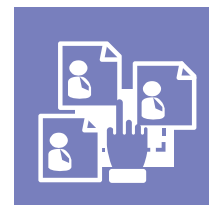
The supervisor provides his/her assessment



The employee and his/her supervisor discuss the assessment results



An individual assessment report is generated



The results of individual assessments are aggregated

Regular use of the tool helps to design professional development paths for staff members. An important feature, especially for managers, is the possibility to aggregate data from the self-assessments of all employees, thereby creating an overview of the administration as a whole. Thus, the findings can serve as a basis for developing learning and development plans to fill the gaps.

This user-friendly and flexible tool covers a full range of competencies and can be applied to all kinds of administrations, regardless of their size, and adapted to their needs, for example, whether they are managing a national or regional programme. It can be an essential tool for designing, planning and setting up structures, procedures and resources for the next Cohesion Policy programming period 2021-2027.

Ultimately, it is contributing to improving the functioning of public administrations and thereby the quality of the services provided for citizens and businesses alike.

On DG REGIO's website, you will find:

- information on how to obtain access to the self-assessment tool;
- user guidelines in 22 languages; and
- a brochure and infographic.

FIND OUT MORE

To request access to or receive feedback on the tool, please contact:

REGIO-COMPETENCY-FRAMEWORK@ec.europa.eu

For more information and guidance on how to use the tool:
<https://europa.eu/!CP84pW>

Interreg: the European spirit in action



Interreg transnational cooperation is helping to solve joint challenges and bringing benefits to the citizens in cities and regions across Europe.

Who ensures that coping with wildfires in the Balkan area, naval accidents in the Baltic Sea, climate change in the Alpine region, air pollution in European metropolises or protecting the biodiversity around the Danube estuary is taken care of? These are not just matters of national concern, which is why it is easy to see why cooperation across national borders and in wider European areas is vital to protect both people and nature. And how does this happen? Well, Interreg transnational cooperation projects are currently helping to solve common challenges such as these.

What about saving energy by adopting new technologies while, at the same time, cutting greenhouse gas emissions? Or testing new solutions for more environmentally friendly yet accessible transport infrastructure in cities and remote areas? The best way is to talk to your neighbours: working together and exchanging knowledge saves everyone time and money. However, what works around the Mediterranean is not necessarily the best solution for central European regions.

Interreg transnational cooperation also delivers territorial cohesion. As an entrepreneur, you may have an idea for a new product but are unable to find a forum to discuss it or a laboratory to test it. Providing access to and sharing innovation infrastructure in wider circles can prove very useful. Interreg cooperation helps identify such opportunities, enhances access to research, and prepares small and medium-sized enterprises for conquering global markets.

Added value

Transnational cooperation projects bring together people from the public sector, research and academic institutions as well as businesses and civil society organisations from different countries. Matters of joint concern motivate them to get engaged in transnational cooperation to help build trust across borders and foster European integration.

Fifteen transnational programmes have been set up across Europe with EUR 2.1 billion provided by the EU's budget for 2014-2020. Transnational cooperation brings added value to citizens as well as to businesses across EU regions. It demonstrates a pragmatic approach to delivering a safer, greener, smarter, more connected and prosperous European Union.



Transnational cooperation, in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), gives an important dimension to territorial cooperation. It allows us to look at our continent from a wider strategic perspective, allowing us to better identify the opportunities and challenges our citizens, our administrations and our businesses face on a daily basis. I believe that a lot was done, and a lot can still be done in Europe through transnational projects, in that way bringing our continent closer together in a meaningful and strategically sound way.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Committee of the Regions

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION HELPS MAKE MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES WORK

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, whereby countries and regions in a defined geographical area address their common challenges that cannot be solved in isolation but require transnational cooperation.

Currently, there are strategies for four macro-regions:

- > Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR)
- > Danube region (EUSDR)
- > Adriatic-Ionian region (EUSAIR)
- > Alpine region (EUSALP)

How transnational Interreg programmes support the strategies:

- > Interreg transnational projects actively contribute to the strategies' goals and actions. In return, they benefit from political backing and higher visibility.
- > Transnational programmes are one of the funding opportunities for implementation of the strategies.
- > Transnational programmes notably support governance of the strategies through a number of measures, ranging from financing the priority area coordinators to organising events with stakeholders and promoting the strategies.

“When you see that other people see the same opportunities, face similar problems and find ways to overcome that, and come to not quite the same but similar conclusions on what to do next, it empowers us to say this is the way it is, it shows up in every country.”

RemoAge project partner, Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

When faced with natural catastrophes, accidents affecting larger geographical areas, the impact of climate change or biodiversity decline it is obvious that cooperation beyond borders is the most efficient way to protect the common European good.

On average, wildfires destroy about 4000 square kilometres of EU territory every year, exerting a devastating impact on ecosystems, human health and the climate. Furthermore, longer dry seasons are turning fields and forests into fuel for fires.

Interreg project partners from neighbouring countries are joining forces to assess and respond to risks, and to protect the affected areas more efficiently. For example, an online service developed by the **DriDanube** project is monitoring droughts and issuing warnings in a timely manner in 10 countries across the Danube region. 'Setting up the dialogue between different stakeholders at a national or regional level brings better understanding of the problem. We are better prepared by acting together,' says Zorica Srđević from the Faculty of Agriculture at Serbia's University of Novi Sad. An inter-institutional management strategy frames cooperation among national authorities, farmers and water managers before, during and after drought events, not only for exchanging information but also for conducting joint interventions, when necessary.

From crisis to risk management

'Forest fires are an endemic with incalculable consequences on the environment and population. That is why we need a common space to manage emergencies, where we can help each other, promoting both the culture of solidarity and transnational cooperation,' says Juan José Muñoz Iglesia, head of the fire prevention service in Deza Galicia, Spain.

Thanks to the Interreg project **Fire RS Territories**, France, Spain and Portugal are now better monitored for potential wildfires. In practice, a Spanish satellite, Portuguese

drones and a French control centre work together in a system that detects forest fires in wider cross-country areas. Another Interreg tool, **WRF-SFIRE**, analyses weather conditions – wind, temperature and humidity – to inform rescue services and communities in Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece about the paths fires might take. The system developed by the Interreg project **DISARM** has been taken up by public services following a successful pilot during fires in Greece in summer 2018.

Apart from pooling services and tools developed transnationally, an important aspect of coping with crisis situations is aligning operating procedures, which was proved, for example, during the Italian Costa Concordia cruise ship's fatal accident in 2012. Now, with support from the Interreg project **DiveSMART-Baltic**, rescue coordination centres in Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden use the same standard operating procedures and situation reports to respond to emergencies better and faster in the shared waters of the Baltic Sea.

Rock and roll

One of the major natural risks in the Alpine area concerns falling rocks resulting from, among others, thawing of the Alps' permafrost. 'Through **RockTheAlps**, local experiments are now being extended within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region to better integrate the forest ecosystem service in protection against rockfall,' explains Benjamin Einhorn, director of the French Alpine Centre for Natural Risk Prevention. A new transnational inventory of 10000 rockfall events is the starting point for creating risk-zone maps based on an analysis and comparison of topographic conditions in the affected regions. This enables the modelling of prevention activities while better managing forest ecosystems to reduce the risk of rockfalls.

Growing biodiversity in EU farmlands

Interreg projects are also addressing the biodiversity crisis. One example is the **PARTRIDGE** project which proves that transnational cooperation can help to reverse the alarming decline in European farmland biodiversity. Using a bottom-up approach, farmers in the North Sea

region are turning 7% of their arable land into flower plots and beetle banks to benefit wildlife. The project has attracted significant interest thanks to the close cooperation among over 300 farmers, hunters, conservationists and local volunteers from five countries. Indeed, there are promising signs that birds and insects are returning to the sites less than two years later. The EU Commissioner for Agriculture, Phil Hogan and policymakers joined the iconic PARTRIDGE farm walks to learn how the measures, which have already been adopted by Dutch agri-environment schemes, work. 'I believe that we farmers should work with, and not against, nature,' says Oliver Mehuys, a Flemish farmer and a pilot site owner referring to the cooperation in the project.

A more biodiverse and safer EU is what every citizen would opt for. By cooperating beyond borders, Interreg is enabling a joint response to common challenges, and bringing this vision closer to the people.

DriDanube (Danube):

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/dridanube>

FireRS (South-West Europe):

<https://www.enerpatsudoe.fr/>

DISARM (Balkan-Mediterranean):

<http://www.interreg-balkanmed.eu/approved-project/16/>

DiveSMART-Baltic (Baltic Sea):

<https://projects.interreg-baltic.eu/projects/divesmart-baltic-4.html>

RockTheAlps (Alpine Space):

<https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/rockthealps/en/home>

PARTRIDGE (North Sea):

<https://northsearegion.eu/partridge>



By monitoring rockfalls, experts can create risk-zone maps to better manage forest ecosystems

A CHANGE IS ON THE WAY

Three-quarters of the EU's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from the energy and transport sectors. This challenge is a driving force for Interreg projects to actively contribute to the climate and energy targets for reducing emissions by 40% until 2030, bringing benefits to citizens in their everyday life.

With a variety of technologies available across the energy chain in Europe, transnational projects are disseminating the benefits of implementing new energy-efficiency technologies around the continent at costs suited to our pockets.

Saving energy on home comforts

'They brought the solution to where there was a need. I'm saving a lot of money on heating as everything is so much better insulated than before,' says Amélie Goblas from Longueau, northern France. Amélie is part of one of the families benefiting from the **E=O** project which is creating

a market for top-class and affordable net-zero-energy house refurbishments. In these houses, energy consumption is almost equal to energy production. The concept developed in north-west Europe, based on a one-week



Older town buildings and local housing alike can benefit from eco-renovation and innovative energy-saving techniques



Well-insulated windows with shutters save energy and provide for a healthier living space

smooth implementation, follows a successful model from the Netherlands which delivered 2 000 refurbishments across the country. Thanks to the project, 17 pilot homes in the UK were completely refurbished, enabling the roll-out to over 300 other households. In France, after 22 pilots, 6 500 more homes will be retrofitted.

While net-zero house retrofits seem to be an obvious choice for cutting GHG emissions and contributing to Europe's 2020 climate and energy targets, efficiency in buildings is not restricted to households. For example, the renovation of old town buildings is the focus of **ENER'PAT**, another transnational project which is piloting the renovation of four buildings in Portugal, France and Spain using non-traditional construction materials. 'ENER'PAT allows us to test eco-renovation techniques in buildings. The project also supports exchanges at the EU level, which encourages our commitment and is spreading this ambitious approach to three other cities in south-western Europe,' says Jean-Marc Vayssoze-Faure, Mayor of Cahors, France.

The mobility challenge

The transport sector accounts for a quarter of GHG emissions, highlighting the need for robust cooperation among regions to improve the efficiency of mobility systems. In central Europe, transport is the second largest energy-consuming sector and the fastest growing in terms of energy use. Thus, new initiatives from Central Europe, the North Sea and Mediterranean areas were put in place to introduce measures addressing the negative effects of urbanisation and growing transport demands.

Thanks to the **RUMOBIL** project, new mobility services are better connecting the sparsely populated peripheral areas, following pilots in eight Central Europe countries. Passengers benefit from info-mobility tools, user-oriented applications, experimental multimodal bus/rail connections and flexible bus services based on community engagement. The results – improved quality of life and an enhanced local economy – are evidenced by new public transport services attracting new passengers. On average, the pilot projects have increased the number of passengers by 13%, with the highest growth of 28% in the Czech region of Vysočina.

Limited mobility and accessibility in cities and remote areas, insufficient links to main transport hubs and high CO₂ emissions are considerable challenges for transport infrastructures. As demonstrated by the **SHARE-North** project, Interreg is helping public authorities to improve this situation. It has successfully promoted the concept of shared mobility hubs by offering attractive alternatives to individual car ownership, and spreading the concept from Bremen in Germany to municipalities in Belgium and Norway. Thanks to Interreg, many car-sharing enthusiasts in Bremen have opted either to sell their car or not buy one, resulting in a reduction of over 6000 privately owned cars. This corresponds to saving 25 tonnes of CO₂ over 2.5 years and free urban street space equivalent to more than 10 football pitches!

Another major challenge is to support the uptake and implementation of these pioneering approaches which provide flexible and cleaner mobility options. For instance, this is being addressed by the Mediterranean Urban Transports community of projects which provides solutions in local sustainable urban mobility plans. The community hosts a network of seven projects, implementing pilot

activities in more than 30 Mediterranean cities, ranging from electro-mobility networks and smart mobility systems to tackling traffic congestion generated by tourists' mobility. For example, Misano Adriatico, a tourist town in Italy, adopted a mobility plan thanks to the **MOBILITAS** project. This will cut the daily traffic on mainland roads by 6.2% and on coastline roads by 14.7%, thereby reducing CO₂ emissions by 6.6% and 7.5% respectively.



Cycle paths are helping to reduce the use of cars in Adriatic Misano in the Italian coastal region of Emilia-Romagna

Interreg proves how strategic work across borders fills a gap for joint activities to improve energy efficiency and access to environmentally friendly and flexible mobility options, while bringing tangible benefits to citizens.

E=0 (North-West Europe):

www.nweurope.eu/e=0

ENER'PAT (South-West Europe):

www.enerpatsudoe.fr

RUMOBIL (Central Europe):

www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/rumobil.html

SHARE-North (North Sea):

www.share-north.eu

MOBILITAS (Mediterranean):

www.mobilitas.interreg-med.eu

IF YOU START ME UP, I'LL NEVER STOP

Setting up a business is challenging and running a successful company even more so. It requires skills, creativity, knowledge and access to financing. In transnational Interreg projects, cities and regions cooperate beyond borders and learn how to better support entrepreneurs at all stages of their business journey.

Small and medium-sized companies represent 99% of all businesses in the EU. They also create around 85% of new jobs and provide two-thirds of private-sector employment in the EU.

But only 37% of Europeans would like to be self-employed, compared to 51% in the US and China. Through Interreg projects, cities and regions are working with education and business support experts across Europe to change

this. They exchange experiences and develop new approaches encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs.

In the **Atlantic Youth Creative Hubs** project, partners have created a transnational platform to empower young creatives. In 'creative jam sessions' they help people aged between 16 and 30 to realise their business ideas from scratch. One example is João, who says that he 'found inspiration, training and coaching for entrepreneurship and learned a lot about brand management'. Today, he is a successful young fashion designer in Portugal. Soon after the jam session he joined the fashion business and the Santo Thyrso factory design incubator in Porto and went on to win the Portuguese New Creators Fashion Contest, making his debut at Portugal's most important national fashion event.

Helping start-uppers to start

João is proof that an entrepreneurial spirit is important but not enough. Starting a company requires skills and knowledge that young entrepreneurs often lack. The transnational **CERlecon** project is changing this in Central Europe. A new approach to inspire and train young people with business ideas is being tested across eight countries: **PlayParks** are co-working academies that encourage mutual social learning. They help to launch real products such as a natural chewing gum called 'Alpengummi' which is now appearing in supermarkets. 'During our six months at PlayPark Vienna we received valuable feedback and training to develop our business plan,' say founders Claudia Bergero and Sandra Falkner.

Taking innovation forward

Experience shows that without continuous innovation, even encouraging start-ups like Alpengummi may soon stop thriving. So how can municipalities and research organisations support entrepreneurs to carry on innovating? Thanks to Interreg projects, testing new services such as design workshops anchors research within companies.

'Transnational cooperation provides us with access to the latest research results and business models. In practice,

Fishermen at work off the picturesque white beaches around Trave di Portonovo near the city of Ancona in Italy



this helps us to introduce new products to the market,' according to Maciej Bartoszek from Perfectwoodhouse. He is one of many entrepreneurs benefiting from the Interreg **BALTSE@NOIR** project. In design workshops across the Baltic Sea area, the project inspires furniture companies to create smart products adapted to senior needs, such as a mirror displaying personalised messages and a chair measuring blood pressure. All the design methods and tools will be made available in an online library to help companies assess the particular needs of seniors in a given country, adjust their products and facilitate their entry into other markets. At the same time, the integration of new technologies into traditional furniture design has a positive effect on seniors who want to stay independent longer.

This is equally true for other sectors. The **ARIEL** project holds brokering events in the Adriatic-Ionian region to support small-scale fisheries and aquaculture enterprises. Entrepreneurs and researchers jointly search technological and non-technological solutions for the challenges they face. 'If we want more local food production and a competitive European small-scale fisheries and aquaculture sector, fish farmers need to work together with both scientific and business organisations,' says Basilio Ciaffardoni, an Italian fish farmer who profited from one such brokering event.

Better access to financing

Access to financing is another crucial issue when scaling up businesses and innovation. Florence Gschwend from Chrysalix

Technologies in the UK admits that 'as an early-stage start-up we are always strapped for cash'. Her company is developing an innovative biomass fractionation process using low-cost ionic liquids. Transnational Interreg projects like **BioBase4SME** offer an efficient way of testing new ideas to improve access to financing for such companies. The project developed a voucher system to support the commercialisation of innovations in North-West Europe's emerging bio-economy. 'This coupon helped us to get more value from the funding we have received while connecting us to a highly skilled organisation for our scale-up work,' Florence acknowledges.

AYCH (Atlantic Area):

<http://www.aych.eu>

CERlecon (Central Europe):

www.interreg-central.eu/cerleco

BALTSE@NOIR (Baltic Sea):

<https://projects.interreg-baltic.eu/projects/baltsenior-30.html>

ARIEL (Adriatic-Ionian):

<https://ariel.adrioninterreg.eu/>

BioBase4SME (North-West Europe):

<http://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/bio-innovation-support-for-entrepreneurs-through-out-nwe-regions/>

Interreg Transnational cooperation



IDEA

At the start-up phase, the AYCH project has developed a platform for training, coaching, business ideas and inspiration.



START-UP SUPPORT

The essential skills and knowledge to start a company are provided by the CERlecon project.



TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Entrepreneurs need support to innovate through research, workshops and brokering events, like those organised by ARIEL.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Access to finance is crucial to enable businesses and innovation to scale up, as shown by BIOBASE4SME.

Innovative monitoring system changes cooperation across borders



Interact's eMS system has saved up to EUR 20 million and built a community within Interreg to support innovation, cooperation and harmonisation.

Discussions about monitoring systems are rarely exciting. However, the electronic Monitoring System (eMS), developed by the ERDF-funded Interact Programme as a community monitoring system for Interreg, bucks this trend.

Before the current funding period, Interreg programmes – which have much smaller budgets than mainstream programmes – mainly built their own monitoring systems that responded to the same overarching legal requirements in slightly different ways.

For Interreg programmes, which specialise in promoting cooperation and harmonisation across borders, this was not the right approach.

Strength in numbers

Four programmes willing to come together to develop a community monitoring system responded to Interact's call for a new approach. The new monitoring system (eMS), which was built from the bottom up, is available through licences to all Interreg programmes, free of charge.

The initial concept was that even if these five programmes, including Interact, used the eMS system, it would already save the EU taxpayer money and would be a successful exercise in cooperation.

To date, some 37 programmes have signed licence agreements to use the eMS, saving up to EUR 20 million when measured against a non-cooperative approach. The wider benefits of the eMS system were explored in an impact assessment evaluation by the European Policies Research Centre at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland.

The independent evaluation found that using the eMS required programmes to be flexible and adopt a common approach to basic programme management and processes. This flexibility created additional capacity and opportunity for innovation within programmes.

Furthermore, the community established to support the development of the software became its own vehicle for

EUR 4 bn Cooperation funds managed by eMS

38% Interreg programmes using eMS software

EUR 20 m Saved through cooperative approach

82% User-satisfaction rating

“As a newly established programme, eMS not only helped us meet requirements on eCohesion but also provided us with a system that is built on the collective programme management experience of the community of Interreg programmes.”

Barbara Di Piazza, Head of Joint Secretariat, Interreg ADRION Programme in the case-based Impact Evaluation (April 2019)

further harmonisation. Participating programmes shared understandings of complex legal problems as well as approaches to programme management. They also developed and shared plug-ins which provided additional functionality to the core eMS system.

Evaluating the benefits

From its inception, the eMS has grown to provide the monitoring and management system for around a third of all Interreg programmes. It supports both large programmes, which could afford to develop their own systems, as well as smaller ones that would struggle to identify resources for an equivalent system.

For smaller programmes in particular, access to the eMS system enabled the digitisation of the application process, which saved staff resources and reduced error rates.

The benefits of the eMS were part of the wider assessment of five of Interact's long-term interventions: creating Harmonised Implementation Tools (HIT); the keep.eu database; the development of a harmonised Interreg brand; as well as Interact's support for macro-regional strategies.

As a feature of Interact's objective to improve public administration, these interventions significantly increased the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation and management and improved the resilience of programme bodies to deal with external changes.

The option to provide an Interreg community monitoring system in the next programming period is currently being considered by the Interact Monitoring Committee. ■

FIND OUT MORE

www.interact-eu.net

IN YOUR OWN WORDS

PANORAMA
welcomes your
contributions!

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

on Cohesion Policy post-2020. *Panorama* welcomes contributions in your own language, which we may feature in future editions. Please contact us at regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu for further information on guidelines and deadlines.

Cohesion Policy: tackling the challenges to come



Constanze Krehl
MEP and Coordinator of the European Socialists in the Regional Development Committee (REGI)

In the past decades, Cohesion Policy has been one of the European Union's most successful tools for achieving prosperity and equality through solidarity between regions.

Not only has Cohesion Policy been responsible for reducing disparities between countries and regions and helping the less-developed regions to catch up, but it

has helped to achieve the EU's important political priorities, which is another one of its main objectives.

For the future, we want a modern Cohesion Policy that takes lessons from the past but strives to progressively tackle the challenges of the present and future.

Therefore, we want a Cohesion Policy that creates sustainable work and, at the same time, respects the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The European elections have shown us yet again that young people want us to fight climate change more courageously and that we have to consider the effects of all of our policies on the environment and the citizens.

Cohesion Policy can be a major driver in the EU towards a zero-carbon economy if it sets the right framework. It can support innovation in this area as well as help regions to adjust to the necessary changes, for instance in public transport systems.

Furthermore, we want a Cohesion Policy that supports the regions in tackling the major challenges of the future, such as globalisation, climate change and migra-

tion. A modern Cohesion Policy must also continue our fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination.

We want to carry on helping citizens to achieve their personal goals and accomplishing their challenges. We will continue to make sure to fully include the regions and their needs as well as those of civil society and the social partners.

Thus, Cohesion Policy will be an important instrument for achieving the EU's political priorities and for ensuring a successful future for the European Union. ■



European Parliament

Investing in a future role for Cohesion Policy

The role and importance of Cohesion Policy has evolved in recent years. Over time, its tasks have been expanded and it has become one of the EU's major investment tools.

Originally, the main goal of Cohesion Policy was to reduce disparities between European regions in the 1970s, 80s and 90s. It served not only to reduce disparities between regions, but also to strengthen their competitiveness.

At the same time, interest in the urban dimension increased, especially the integrated approach which became of particular relevance. Consequently, Cohesion Policy slowly transformed from its initial 'traditional approach' – based exclusively on infrastructure investments – to its new version which includes a social dimension.

Moreover, over time, Cohesion Policy also began to respond to new challenges such as climate change, digitalisation and ICT technologies. Smart cities started to spread rapidly and regions understood that they needed to



Jan Olbrycht
MEP and Coordinator for the European People's Party in the Regional Development Committee (REGI)

develop their smart specialisations strategies in order to strengthen their competitiveness.

It is noteworthy that a part of Cohesion Policy funds has also been effectively invested in reinforcing new research centres and the cooperation between them, in order to reach excellence and to be able to compete for Horizon 2020 funding. Observing the ongoing debate, it cannot be overlooked that there is a strong tendency to limit Cohesion Policy to its original role – i.e. to reduce disparities and thus to diminish its significance for investments.

I consider such a change as unfavourable because it underestimates and even disregards the achievements of Cohesion Policy in the area of launching investments and decentralisation, including public participation.

It is no coincidence that when looking for savings in the EU's future budget 2021-2027, the budget the Commission has proposed for Cohesion Policy is being reduced compared to the current financial perspective. During its current term, the European Parliament has strongly opposed any reduction of Cohesion Policy in the future.

I hope that the debate on Cohesion Policy will go on and will allow it to fully present its multidimensional meaning. ■



European Parliament

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.



Summit calls for a Europe closer to its citizens

At the recent European Summit of Regions and Cities 2019 held in Romania, Amaury Bisiaux, a young French journalist and winner of the #EUinMyRegion blog contest, reflects on the aims and aspirations of the Bucharest Declaration.

The 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities took place on 14 and 15 March 2019 in Bucharest, Romania. Around 700 local and regional elected representatives presented the 'Bucharest Declaration', drawn up by the Committee of the Regions with the aim of 'strengthening the democratic foundation of the European Union'.

'The European Union needs its regions and cities as much as they need the European Union,' reads the Bucharest Declaration, the result of three months of work by the European Committee of the Regions, which was finally adopted at the summit in the Romanian capital.

Europe is experiencing a fateful year, with the rise in populism expected to be witnessed in the European elections and the exit of the United Kingdom from the Union. During the event, the EU's Chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, expressed his concerns about a no-deal Brexit, listing the 'innumerable consequences' it would have, particularly for the UK, at the human, social, economic and financial levels.

Getting back on track

The EU must reinvent itself if it does not want to disappear. In an era of globalisation, the digital revolution and climate change, Europe must adapt accordingly without renouncing its values. The Bucharest Declaration begins by recalling that 'the European Union [was] founded on the principles of freedom, solidarity, democracy'.

The problem is that today, for most of our fellow citizens, Europe too often implies Brussels: the European capital that decides everything. The polls portray a vision of the EU that would be too bureaucratic, too opaque, too far – in short, too far from its citizens. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 58% of Europeans no longer have confidence in the EU institutions.

For the Committee of the Regions, the solution should not come from on 'high' but from the 'bottom', from local and regional elected representatives. Not a Europe of nations but a Europe of regions. In fact, the summit was judiciously placed under the banner '(Re)New EUrope' – inspiration for the Bucharest Declaration.

Indeed, the aim of this Declaration, addressed to the European leaders, is to (re)found the EU 'to increase the feeling of belonging [of young people] to the European project' and thus to avoid 'European integration becoming a reversible



process'. But how can this European feeling be instilled in the younger generation, who are by far the most absent in elections?

'Democracy begins in our regions and cities'

The lack of participation in political elections does not mean the absence of participation in political life. We see it today with the many young people who are committed to the climate, more social justice and democracy throughout Europe – young people are not absent from the debate.

Europe, which tends to be very hierarchical, very bureaucratic, is nevertheless based on one essential principle: subsidiarity. The principle of subsidiarity defends the idea that the Union can only intervene if the States cannot do better on their own scale. That means always giving preference to the lower stratum inasmuch as it is effective to carry out public policy.

However, if the most effective level is neither the European level nor the national level, but the regional level, then why not go local? 'Democracy begins in our regions and cities. Local elected officials are closest to the people and have daily relations with citizens,' said Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the European Committee of the Regions.

If the EU is, above all, an economic and financial union, as its founders wanted, then 'social rights must be placed on an equal footing with economic rights'. This is achieved by acting on the three components of the economy, social and the environment, so that we can actually implement the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

All this requires a 'greater decentralisation' and consequently, above all, an investment. This is why the Bucharest Declaration also calls for 'an ambitious budget' for the EU. Will Europe be willing to trust its cities and regions to govern more? This is the big challenge for the next Commission as it takes office later this year following the European elections.

During the summit, Karl-Heinz Lambertz and President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Luca Jahier, once again called on the European institutions to work on a 'permanent consultation mechanism'. Although the recommendations of these two Committees are only advisory, since 2015, the CoR has already organised more than 200 dialogues bringing together 40000 citizens. The Committee is also calling for the next EU budget (2020) to be increased from 1% to 1.3% of the EU-27 gross national income. ■



Amaury Bisiaux studied Political Communication at Sorbonne University in France. As the winner of the 2018 blog contest organised within the framework of DG Regio's EUinMyRegion, he was rewarded with a three-week training course to study political communication in Brussels and was subsequently selected as an accredited young journalist to cover the Bucharest Summit.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://cor.europa.eu/en/summit2019>

“Interreg Volunteer Youth”

Volunteering youthful ideas to strengthen cohesion in Europe

The 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities, which took place in Bucharest, Romania on 14-15 March 2019, gathered more than 900 EU, national, local and regional leaders from across Europe to discuss the future of the European Union and how to involve citizens more effectively in the European project. The event was co-organised by the European Committee of the Regions, the Romanian presidency of the Council of the European Union, and the Romanian delegation at the CoR. During the event, a declaration by local and regional leaders on the future of Europe was adopted in order to share their opinions ahead of the EU institutions’ next term of office. <https://bit.ly/2Y6aEbV>

Below we present the impressions and opinions of two budding IVY journalists who attended the summit.



My experience in the European Volunteer Service included work on a project on higher education at the Portuguese University of Minho in Braga. I also participated in IVY in the Interreg South Baltic programme in Gdansk, Poland.

A EUROPE MORE COHESIVE THAN EVER

As an IVY volunteer at the Interreg South Baltic Joint Secretariat, I had the opportunity to attend the 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities where the focus was mainly on the importance of Cohesion Policy.

In order to promote the European Union’s harmonious development, it must try to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity.

Individual EU Member States, especially the less-developed ones, are not able to reduce and eliminate the challenging issues facing their regions, such as inadequate infrastructure, alone. Indeed, the strategic use of the

European Structural and Investments Funds (ESIFs) is crucial, as underlined by the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu, during the event.

Through its people-to-people projects, Cohesion Policy is an efficient tool for creating and maintaining ties among EU citizens, not only at the local level but especially across Member State regions and cities. It is also involved in various cross-border programmes, such as Interreg. Furthermore, it implies the consolidation of a structured and permanent dialogue, thanks to the mutual understanding between the EU institutions, like the European Commission, and Member State regions – through effective and well-functioning multi-level governance. Their aim is to meet the new global challenges and reinforce the spirit of unity among the people of Europe. This is the very essence of reinvigorating the added value of Cohesion Policy, according to the Bucharest Declaration: ‘Building the EU from the ground up with our regions and cities’.

Danilo Distefano



As a French former Interreg Volunteer Youth, I was on mission at the Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy) European affairs' office where I helped the Interreg MED projects.

FROM INTERREG ON THE GROUND TO THE SUMMIT OF THE REGIONS AND CITIES

As an Interreg Volunteer Youth, attending the Summit of Regions and Cities was an opportunity to explore Cohesion Policy from a new angle. The IVY initiative proposes that young Europeans should integrate in local institutions taking part in transregional Interreg programmes and support and promote their achievements in the communities reached.

It enabled me to help involve the Emilia-Romagna (Italy) region in such programmes and to witness IVY's cooperation with its academic, associate and private partners in the field.

Their actions – stemming from European priorities – and bottom-up recommendations to both national and European authorities, feed into a constant dialogue while raising questions about the powers allocated at each political level to carry out reforms and policies and to influence the European level.

Such conversations were explored in Bucharest where 150 local leaders were invited to discuss the need for local levels of governance to have a greater say in European affairs.

Centred around the three summit themes of democracy, proximity and solidarity, a consensus was reached on the crucial role of local and elected authorities to deal with the common and/or specific challenges facing today's societies, through greater knowledge and reach.

But how can they '(Re)New EUrope', as expressed in the summit's title? The challenge is to get the EU closer to its citizens. Many participants said that the European Parliament election campaigns should be more European and less focused on national programmes. To promote trust and connection, the Committee of the Regions advocates more channels for democratic participation and making the strong impact of the Cohesion Policy more visible and better known to European citizens, starting, for example, with small initiatives like IVY.

Elodie Joseph-Auguste



Moravian-Silesian Region: smart, innovative and well balanced

The Moravian-Silesian Region, located in the north-east of Czechia, is the country's third most populous region. Although it is highly industrialised, it also boasts beautiful mountainous landscapes, three large protected areas and several smaller nature reserves.

One of Czechia's 14 administrative regions, in the past this region was divided between the historical lands of Moravia and Silesia. Even the region's capital, Ostrava, has a Moravian part (Moravská Ostrava) and a Silesian one (Slezská Ostrava).

Covering an area of 5 427 km², at the beginning of 2019, the region had 1 203 299 inhabitants. After Prague, it has the highest population density in Czechia (222 per km²). The largest town in the region is Ostrava, with almost 300 000 inhabitants.

In 2017, the Moravian-Silesian Region's gross domestic product stood at EUR 18.017 billion, generating 9.38% of national GDP. The region's per capita GDP is 82.4% of the national average and 74% of the EU average.



It is among the most heavily industrialised regions in Czechia, with industry accounting for 41.7% of its GDP in 2017. Job numbers are currently at their highest since 2000: the proportion of people employed reached 59.4% in 2017, the highest figure for 10 years. Key industry sectors include iron and engineering, with the car industry playing an increasingly prominent role over the past 10 years, along with information technology. The region also has a long tradition of coal mining (see below).

In 2018, the proportion of inhabitants with a university education stood at 16.8%. At present, the Moravian-Silesian Region ranks moderately in Europe-wide comparisons based on levels of innovation. Research,



development and innovation are led mainly by large technology firms operating on an international scale. In early 2017, the Moravian-Silesian Innovation Centre was launched, with a mission to foster growth and innovation within firms. Recently, the region has also seen the creation of several major industrial zones, science and technology parks and other projects attracting an interesting portfolio of investors. Ostrava is home to the IT4Innovations super-computer centre which provides services both to scientific research teams and businesses.

Well connected

Most of the region enjoys good highway infrastructure. Many towns and villages benefit from connections to the D1 motorway and the rail corridor. In terms of transit corridors, the region is in a geographically advantageous location, with links to Poland and Slovakia. The international airport has ample

facilities for planes, passengers and cargo. A highly developed integrated public transport system means that almost 80% of inhabitants live in a community that is linked to the rail network.

The region's three protected areas of outstanding natural beauty make up 17.3% of its geographical area. These include the Beskydy and Jeseníky mountain areas and the wetlands of the River Odra and the Poodří region. The Moravian-Silesian Region provides a number of major spa resorts; mining surveys have shown that the purity of the Ostrava mine water in former coal mines is on a par with spa water and plans are being drawn up to exploit it.

The region has a rich cultural heritage – the landscape is dotted with 103 castles and fortresses. Many international music festivals are held here alongside a host of other cultural, sporting and social events, such as the Junior Ice Hockey World Championships scheduled for late 2019.



Innovative enterprise managers value the quality of life in the region. Major advantages include the accessibility of mountain areas, cultural and sports activities, health care, family-friendly facilities, accommodation and opportunities for maintaining a good work-life balance. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.msk.cz/index-en.html>



A coal region in transition

The transformation to a climate-neutral economy can have an overall positive impact on the EU economy. Nevertheless, the shift away from traditional sectors such as coal also brings with it a number of challenges and could increase social and regional disparities. This is why this deep modernisation process needs to be managed well, ensuring a fair and socially acceptable transition for all.

Within the framework of the Energy Union, the Commission has launched an initiative to provide tailored support for transition in coal regions. The objective is to help these regions plan for the structural changes linked to their energy transition and cater for potential negative socio-economic impacts.

Country teams made up of Commission experts provide support, while a platform organised by the Commission at the European level brings together all the relevant stakeholders and gives access to technical support and capacity building.

The country teams interact closely with regional and national authorities and other relevant actors to develop solutions accelerating the process of economic diversification and

technological transition. They also guide the regions on the best way to access available funding, leverage their smart specialisation strategies, drive innovative businesses and implement decarbonisation strategies. This includes Cohesion Policy funding which provides a stable, long-term investment framework.

Coal regions share their experience through the platform, bringing together regional and national representatives, social partners, industry and civil society to share good practices and learn from each other. Europe has 41 regions with remaining active coal-mining operations spread over 12 Member States, including the regions of Moravia-Silesia, Ústí nad Labem and Karlovy Vary in Czechia. The coal-mining sector employs 10 000 people in the Moravian Silesian Region, which joined the platform in March 2018.

The first wave of pit closures came in 1989. The current second wave is having a direct impact on all areas of life: as the region is home to some large industrial corporations that depend on coal, its transformation could reduce the number of people leaving because they have lost their jobs. At the same time, traditional coal-fired heating and power plants will close, which might push up energy prices. Existing power plants will have to be replaced, which will require a huge effort and substantial funding.

< Buildings in the former Barbora mine, close to Karviná, are being transformed into leisure and multi-purpose venues

Making a fresh start

The Czechia government has launched a programme called RE:START, aimed at assisting the transformation of regions facing structural challenges. The government is the programme's main guarantor although at the national level it has no specific funding. RE:START uses existing mechanisms for accessing public funds both from European and national programmes. It enables specific calls to be announced for the three regions affected or coal regions to be prioritised in national calls, for example through bonuses. At present, programmes totalling EUR 700 million are available for applicants.

Within RE:START, a restructuring strategy has been created which sets out several key transformation pillars for the Moravian Silesian Region. The aim is to help local firms to adjust to change, and to attract foreign investment which brings higher added value. Support for research and development is a priority, with benefits for the area's economy. The local residents are not forgotten either, as the region aims to provide better educational opportunities focusing on technical subjects, thereby removing barriers associated with possible social instability.

One such transformation initiative is the 'Landscape after Mining' project that targets the area between the towns of Karviná, Havířov and Orlová, which has been greatly affected by coal mining over the past three centuries. Some mines are still working, but closures are planned, posing the question how to find a new, meaningful and functional solution for the region.

There is potential for using the sites of former coal mines for light industry, leisure parks, research and development, multi-functional purposes or short-term recreational purposes. Work is under way to make the Karvinské moře lake and the area around the 'leaning' church, which has sunk 37 metres over the past 300 years, more attractive. New uses are also being found for the Barbora mine's production halls and the 80-metre high František coal mine pithead. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://restartregionu.cz/in-english/>



Proud of the region and its dynamic transformation

The north-eastern corner of Czechia used to be referred to as the country's heart of steel, home to a tough and resilient people. Today, the region is seen in a completely different light. Panorama invited Regional President Ivo Vondrák to explain Moravia-Silesia's transformation into one of the country's most dynamic locations, a region that encourages innovation and champions education, whilst attracting more and more tourists every year.



Mr President, Moravia-Silesia is undergoing a transformation. What role did Czechia's accession to the EU play in this process?

I still believe that, 15 years down the line, the country's accession to the EU was the right step, bringing many benefits to our region and above all to the people who live here. Moravia-Silesia has a long history of industry that arose from its rich coal seams. The Upper Silesian basin contains the largest coal deposits in the country, and coal has been mined here since the 18th century.

The downturn in mining began at the end of the last century and came as a shock to the region and its inhabitants. Czechia's accession to the EU helped us to deal with the changes and start preparing for a 'coal-free' future. The approaching demise of mining will also have an impact on other industries

that directly depend on coal, such as steelmaking and power generation. The right way to deal with these changes is to encourage innovation, digitisation and the development of new skills.

I believe we are heading in the right direction. Heavy industry formerly employed most of the people in our region. Information technology and vehicle manufacturing now employ as many as the steel industry, which is good news as we need to offer our people interesting job opportunities. Moravia-Silesia has long suffered from a downturn in population. The most recent figures are encouraging as the numbers leaving the region have halved within one year, and we aim to put a stop to the loss of talented, experienced and young people. This means ensuring the availability of good work for good money, with good leisure opportunities in a pleasant and healthy environment.

How does EU funding help? Can you point to any specific projects?

European funding has made a major contribution to the quality of life in Moravia-Silesia. The most important projects have been in the fields of transport, social services and health-care, science, research and innovation. Many projects would not have happened without EU funding or would have happened much more slowly and on a smaller scale.

European grants have made a huge contribution to the reconstruction and development of transport infrastructure. High-quality transport infrastructure is an economic multiplier with positive impacts on employment and economic stabilisation. In specific terms, the region has invested EUR 207 million in road reconstruction and repair, with funds coming from the

“ *The Platform on Coal Regions in Transition is a key element; we saw the European Commission’s decision in a very positive light.* ”

EU’s Moravia-Silesia Regional Operational Programme and from our own resources. One of the largest investments, at around EUR 21 million, was the Opava bypass which has reduced congestion in the town.

Investments in health care have also been important: European funding enabled the building of operating theatres at the hospital in Frýdek-Místek and helped in the construction and equipping of in-patient departments at the Silesian Hospital in Opava.

Almost EUR 228 million has gone into building research centres focusing on energy, the environment and the forward-looking super-computing. Constructing a modern Industry 4.0 is as important for us as supporting smart technologies in our towns and regions.

The resources we can access from European funds are important for our region’s development. The Platform on Coal Regions in Transition is a key element; we saw the European Commission’s decision in a very positive light. The transition to low-carbon power is also supported by the Czechia government’s RE:START programme, which is aimed at resolving the specific needs of coal regions in transition.

How do you plan to use future European funding?

Moravia-Silesia has established the key pillars of its transformation based on the government’s restructuring strategy. We want to continue supporting local firms so that they can cope with the changes, and to bring in more growth and export-oriented companies, both Czech and foreign. The key priority is to support research and development that will benefit the local economy. We have taken an active approach here, teaming up with the Ostrava local authority and universities to set up the Moravian-Silesian Innovation Centre (MSIC). With this step, we sparked a greater use of innovation, helping firms to progress. The launch of the MSIC has been absolutely crucial for our region. It’s a place where bold ideas and talented people come together and where the region’s future direction can be mapped out. I believe the MSIC can be expanded to offer an even wider portfolio of services supporting enterprise, innovation and audacious planning.

Another important partner in our region’s development is the Moravian-Silesian Investment and Development (MSID) company which encourages development not only through enterprise and

marketing but also investment. And the Moravian-Silesian Employment Pact (MSPakt) helps us manage the regional labour market. Together, the MSIC, MSID and MSPakt are contributing very significantly to our region’s development, boosting competitiveness and people’s quality of life. With the help of the EU, I believe we have made a very good start and can go on to complete the task of transformation.

We’re not sitting around with our hands in our laps; we have very specific plans. The Landscape after Mining project, for example, seeks sensible and effective ways to make use of mining areas which have suffered negative effects from coal mining. We also have plans to construct a complex rehabilitation centre in Třinec and to modernise the pulmonary unit at the hospital in Frýdek-Místek. Strategic projects are also being drawn up to improve educational standards. So, we know how to make good use of European funding by emphasising the quality of life of our citizens and the environment. I would be delighted to see continued support flowing into our region from Europe as it is enormously important for both Moravia-Silesia and the people who live here. ■

The changing face of Dolní Vítkovice



Dolní Vítkovice is a unique industrial area representing not only an historical demonstration of the preserved original ‘coal-coke-iron’ process but is also a place where people can spend their leisure time and learn more about the worlds of nature or industry.

In 1828, the ironworks were founded here, followed later by the coal mine, creating the industrial character of a region employing thousands of people. However, in 1998, production stopped.

This situation posed the question of how to deal with this unique industrial area. One option was to demolish it completely. Fortunately, the final decision was to rebuild the area, transforming the complex into a unique educational, cultural and social centre which currently serves young people and adult visitors, alike (watch the video).

- 1. Gong:** In the past, 50 000 cubic metres of purified blast furnace gas was housed here. Now Gong holds up to 2 000 visitors participating in educational, cultural and social events. University students are taught here, international conferences and congresses are held here, and workshops, training courses and art exhibitions all take place at the venue.
- 2. Bolt Tower:** In days gone by, up to 1 200 tonnes of pig iron were produced in the bowels of blast furnace No.1 on a daily basis. Today, visitors are taken on tours guiding



WINNING WAYS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PILOT IN OSTRAVA

With a focus on inclusive activities and social housing, ‘A place to call home’ secured a RegioStars 2018 award in Category 3: Creating better access to public services. The project renovated 150 apartments in Czechia’s third largest city, for families who would otherwise have to live in sub-standard housing. It also developed processes to facilitate access to housing, a framework to cooperate with city districts, and social support for tenants, helping them to lead more stable and secure lives and to participate in the community.

<https://europa.eu/!JR33tP>



3.



4.



5.



6.

them through the iron-making process, following the same route that was taken to transport raw materials for pig-iron production at the 'oldest lady on the site' – nicknamed because its foundations date back to 1911. Since May 2015, it has been possible to visit Bolt Tower's new extension which is home to the highest café in Ostrava.

3. Science and Technology Centre: The 14 000 m² site presents science and technology as an entertaining game, revealing the secrets of modern technologies. Mysteries of science, world research curiosities and technical ideas are all presented here. Young and adult explorers can figure out how cities, radio or the human body work, what a rainbow is or how a ship can navigate the sea. This architecturally impressive building houses classrooms with excellent equipment, lecture halls, a cinema auditorium with a capacity for 200 spectators, and modern technical and audio-visual equipment.

4. U6 Science and Technology Centre: Two giant 900-tonne blowers are surrounded by more than 100 interactive exhibits which explain science and technology in an entertaining way. Visitors can see things they have never seen before, figuring out even the most complex technical issues among the historical blowers and movable exhibits. They can try to roll out their own steel sheet, build an iron bridge, or produce electricity – and can even 'fly' into space.

5. Creative Centre Hlubina: Since May 2015, the site of the former Hlubina black coal mine has been opened as an integral part of the old industrial complex. A new art

quarter has emerged from the old buildings which aims to educate participants in the humanities and art and crafts. The former operational and administration buildings have become a multi-genre, cultural centre with cinemas, music rehearsal rooms and a recording studio, presentation spaces, studios and dance rooms.

6. Festival Park: This venue provides an unrivalled environment for holding huge as well as non-mainstream festivals and events for fewer visitors on a 200 000 m² site featuring industrial scenery.

All of these attractions have been created with contribution from EU funds: 8 projects were achieved here thanks to the ERDF which provided nearly EUR 48 million. Total investment in these projects was almost EUR 70 million.

The transformation also brought synergies into the region, with the realisation of dozens of projects in various fields. The area has become an essential stage in the revival of educational and leisure activities not only on the local scale but also across the entire Moravian-Silesian Region. ■

FIND OUT MORE:

<http://www.dolnivitkovice.cz>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3rR5VJK5p4&t=79s>

EU funding boosts tourism in Moravia-Silesia

European funds are also helping to enhance tourist destinations in the Moravian-Silesian Region by improving facilities for visitors to the area and local tourists.

The small towns in the foothills of the Beskydy mountains are among the best places to visit in Czechia. No visitor should miss tasting the fragrant gingerbread in Štramberk, a town whose beauty has earned it the nickname 'Moravia's Bethlehem'. Similarly, Nový Jičín has one of the most beautiful town squares in the country. Visitors can experience the excellent interactive exhibition at the Nový Jičín Visitors' Centre, which tells the story of the town's long tradition of hat-making. The exhibition received ERDF funding of EUR 238 436, of the total project cost of EUR 511 929.

Another jewel in the Beskydy foothills is the town of Příbor – birthplace of Sigmund Freud. In addition to the famous father of psychoanalysis' family home, the town also boasts a 17th century Piarist monastery. Extensive renovation of the building attracted funding from the ERDF in two stages, totaling EUR 1 059 580 of the overall cost of EUR 1 295 519. The regeneration of the fabulous monastery gardens also received EU funding. The monastery includes the Sigmund Freud memorial hall, a library and an exhibition on Příbor's history.

Healthy attractions

In the foothills of the Jeseníky mountains lies the picturesque spa town of Karlova Studánka, which boasts the cleanest air in Central Europe. Meanwhile, in Bruntál – the oldest town in the Czechia – tourists can visit the castle or sample the Bruntál Wellness Centre, which includes water attractions. The overall reconstruction cost EUR 5 617 409, of which the EU contributed EUR 1 860 464.

Another interesting attraction in this area is the historic narrow-gauge railway dating back to 1898 and running from Třemešná in Silesia to Osoblaha along the 'line of a hundred curves'. The project to modernise and develop the narrow-gauge railway was partly EU-funded (EUR 142 801 of a total cost of EUR 350 940) and included the purchase of historic rolling stock designed for excursions.

From Jeseníky, cyclists can set off on the Silesian Scenic Way, leading from Krnov through to Silesia's white pearl – the town of Opava – and onwards to the Baroque castle of Kravaře. Construction of the cycle path linking Krnov and Velké Hoštice was supported with EU funding of EUR 1 638 630 (of the total cost of EUR 2 403 372).

Finally, we arrive at Opava, the former capital of the Austrian – and later Czech – region of Silesia. The town's Art Nouveau houses, squares and churches make it a real gem. The world-famous architect Leopold Bauer worked here, and it is no accident that the town hosts the oldest and third-largest museum in Czechia – the Silesian Museum (established 1814). Repairs to the museum and creation of the Silesia exhibition, bringing together the history, culture and natural wonders of Silesia in a rich collection displayed with the help of modern technology, was EU-funded with EUR 2 885 571 (of the total cost of EUR 4 003 644).

Visitors interested in prehistoric times will be attracted to the DinoPark Ostrava, located near Karviná, which benefited from EU funding of EUR 1 054 172 of the total cost of EUR 2 865 180. On a 35-hectare site, around which visitors travel on the DinoExpres train, dozens of life-size Mesozoic beasts can be seen, as well as a 12-metre-high active volcano and a 3D cinema with attractions for children.

Ostrava, the metropolis of the Moravian-Silesian Region, is also a major tourist destination. History was made here 25 000 years ago when, on Landek Hill, ancient people were among the first in the world to use coal. The region's subsequent history was partly written in coal, which created a highly influential industry. Ostrava boasts an engineering heritage unique in Europe, including the former Dolní Vítkovice industrial area, the Hlubina mine and the coking plants and towering furnaces of the Vítkovice steelworks. ■





Transforming the region's social services

In 2003, the Moravian-Silesian Region was the first in Czechia to launch a pilot project focusing on the transformation of its social services. At that time, people with mental or other disabilities were kept isolated in large institutions situated in quite remote locations and in completely unsuitable buildings, such as chateaux and monasteries.

The capacity of these buildings ranged from 100 to more than 200, each room being shared by 20 or more residents, with just one bathroom or toilet for them all. Care was provided either for men only or only women, with children sharing with adults. The residents were stripped of their legal rights and obliged to live in institutions in an unnatural environment and to adapt to a regime which was very different to everyday life. In such surroundings they endured a fundamental denial of basic human rights, the weakening of competences and responsibilities, less self-sufficiency, and limitations on their privacy and personal freedom.

To put an end to this – a legacy of a period of socialism in Czechoslovakia – the system had to change. The project aiming for a complete systemic change (2008-2019) began in 2008 in all 13 regional organisations providing year-round residential social services to over 1 100 inmates.

In 2013, the city of Ostrava also became involved in changes managed by the Moravian-Silesia Region, the goal being to improve the life of residents and give them human rights and freedoms.

As of 2019, EUR 44 million has been invested to improve life for more than 1 400 residents in approximately 91 new community services across the entire Moravian-Silesian Region.

An innovative element of such change was the comprehensive systemic approach that had not previously existed in Central and Eastern Europe. This enabled many residents to move

from institutional facilities to their biological or foster families, or into community services in urban apartments and houses. As a result, long-term residents in large institutions now live in their own apartments, work and use fieldwork social services (watch the Video).

Investing in community care

These radical changes were financed by EU funds and the budgets of the central government and Moravian-Silesian Region. The scheme is continuing with six investment projects leading to further development and improvements in the region's social services. EU funding of around EUR 6.4 million will improve the lives of another 74 residents.

A subsequent step involves using the experience acquired in a project to reform psychiatric care. If EU funding can be secured, two investment and two non-investment projects will return to community services those suffering from mental illness who have been in psychiatric hospitals for a long time.

Such systemic changes in the provision of social services may be taken up by other regions and districts. The Moravian-Silesian Region is potentially a source of information, experience and good practice for every location where there are breaches of human rights and needs due to institutional care in residential facilities (not only social services, but also hospitals, children's homes, etc.). ■

.....
FIND OUT MORE:
<https://bit.ly/2FsSOYM>

DATA POINT

Why does the EU invest in risk prevention?

EU Cohesion Policy protects millions of citizens by investing in forest-fire prevention, flood-risk management and resilience against other disasters.

The European Union faces multiple risks, including floods and extreme weather events that very often go beyond national borders and are aggravated by climate change. Southern and central Europe experience more heatwaves, forest fires and droughts, while northern and north-eastern Europe face heavier rainfall and flooding. Moreover, the EU's nine outermost regions confront specific challenges due to their high exposure to climate change (e.g. drought, floods, hurricanes and pandemics).

In 2018 alone, natural disasters killed more than 100 people. The economic costs are also huge: close to EUR 10 billion in damages were recorded in Europe in 2016. Investing in risk prevention is vital to preserving the capacity for further socio-economic development. It is also more effective than bearing the cost of inaction: for every one euro spent on prevention, four euros or more will be saved on response.

Since local and regional authorities are the first to be confronted with the impacts of disasters, EU Cohesion Policy is key to disaster risk management.

Funding priorities for 2014-2020

With nearly EUR 8 billion coming from the EU budget for climate change adaptation and risk prevention and management, Cohesion Policy is one of the most important sources of funding in this area, and a major contribution to the Commission's initiative. Adding in national co-financing brings the total investment to close to EUR 10 billion.

The majority of Member States and multiple Interreg programmes have selected risk prevention as a priority for the 2014-2020 funding period. In addition, risk prevention, disaster resilience and climate change adaptation are integrated into

other Cohesion Policy funding priorities, such as innovation, energy efficiency and water management.

Within the broad priorities, a range of specific measures have been prioritised.

The predominant focus of the funds invested is the **prevention** of the most adverse consequences of disasters, such as:

- Actions to improve the knowledge base for disaster-risk management: flood plans, ICT tools, early-warning systems, modelling, radars, video surveillance, etc.;
- Preparation and implementation of prevention strategies, action plans and guidelines, including at the local level;
- Awareness-raising campaigns and training (e.g. on earthquake-proof construction skills);
- Disaster-proofing buildings and networks (e.g. earthquake-resilient schools);
- Flood-prevention infrastructure: dykes, flood walls, storm-water collectors, water basins, etc.;
- Management of land, forests and rivers to prevent risks in managing river flows, water retention, remediation of slope instabilities, removal of combustible biomass in forests, coastline protection, reduction of soil sealing, etc.;
- Ecosystem-based approaches to risk prevention: flood plains, afforestation, green infrastructure for water retention or run-off, green urban spaces, etc.

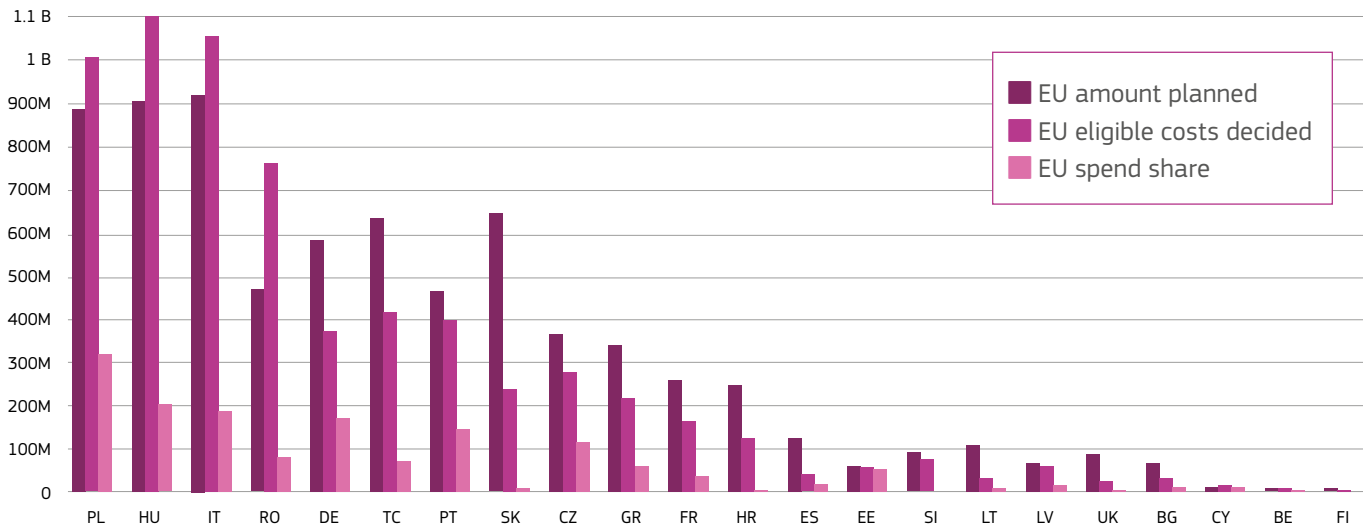
Some Member States also invest in **preparedness**, to ensure sufficient capability for when disasters strike. In particular:

- Infrastructure for civil protection units: integrated rescue stations, coordination centres, etc.;
- Vehicles and equipment: rescue vehicles, fire engines, icebreakers, helicopters, planes, temporary emergency accommodation, etc.;
- Training.

In addition, a limited number of Member States support **recovery** measures to address the adverse consequences after disasters. For instance:

- Reforestation after fires;
- Reconstruction of coastlines and ecosystems;

2014-2020 – Risk prevention allocations and financial implementation by Member State



- › Development of post-flood zones;
- › Protective infrastructure and reconstruction after hurricanes in the outermost regions.

As mentioned above, disaster-risk management is not an isolated activity in Cohesion Policy but is linked to other fields of support and to national and local activities such as town planning. This mainstreaming of risk prevention (and climate change adaptation) is strengthened by the promotion of the sustainable development principle, which has also increased the use of ecosystem-based approaches and green infrastructure across the board.

Cohesion Policy support is complemented by other EU instruments, such as the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, the EU Solidarity Fund, Horizon 2020, and the LIFE programme.

In practical terms, the following project example demonstrates some of the actions financed. Investments in **flood protection** receive major attention. There are many examples, such as Western Attica (Greece) which has serious flooding problems. The Cohesion Fund financed a EUR 80-million flood protection project along the River Eschatia, protecting 134 000 local residents and their property from floods in the suburbs of Athens. It also created over 700 jobs and promoted urban regeneration in a low-income area. The construction of new flood-defence structures has stopped the flooding now and will also enable the future development of areas upstream. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/themes/5#>

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

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

Creating synergies among local EU cybersecurity ecosystems



Enjoying a privileged connection to their local ecosystems, European regions play a significant role in strengthening the European cybersecurity industry and its global competitiveness.

The future picture of the EU's cybersecurity landscape will be largely shaped by policy actions which have a direct impact on regional cybersecurity ecosystems. These actions include initiatives such as digital innovation hubs (DIHs) and regional research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation.

Regional authorities have the means to ensure structured cooperation with local end-users, critical infrastructure operators and service providers, as well as innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), research and innovation (R&I) labs and training centres.

Therefore, interregional cooperation can be regarded as a game changer in enhancing the European cybersecurity market and its competitiveness. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has invested EUR 1.53 million in a five-year interregional cooperation programme called Interreg Europe CYBER. The programme aims to boost the competitiveness of

the EU's cybersecurity SMEs by creating synergies among those European regions specialising in cybersecurity, which are also known as European Cyber Valleys.

Addressing major challenges

The Interreg Europe CYBER project, launched in June 2018, aims to address the three major barriers which have been identified as the main factors affecting the competitiveness of cybersecurity SMEs at the European level. The first concerns the lack of coordination between relevant actors; next is the growing skills shortage in the cybersecurity; and finally, the existing cybersecurity market fragmentation within Europe.

In its first year of activities, the project is focusing on mapping the players within the regional ecosystems and analysing their individual strengths and weaknesses. These steps will help to identify good practices, address the existing barriers and improve public policy instruments with the aim of fostering the competitiveness of regional cybersecurity SMEs.

Estonia: nurturing a successful cybersecurity ecosystem

The Estonian Information System Authority, which is in charge of the country's information systems and computer networks, is one of the regional partners in the Interreg Europe CYBER project.

Estonia represents a highly mature local cybersecurity ecosystem, where investors, business representatives, academia and governmental bodies have an opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas via operational laboratories, such as the TTU Innovation and Business Center Mektory and the e-Estonia Showroom. These serve as networking environments in which SMEs, investors, corporate executives and policymakers can exchange ideas and discuss strategies for the local cybersecurity ecosystem. As a result, Estonia's cybersecurity ecosystem boasts strong SMEs – including SpectX, CyEx

Technologies, Cybernetica and Guardtime – able to provide leading services and solutions against cyber threats.


In 2019, project events will focus on gaining a better insight into the cybersecurity ecosystems of three other regions: Wallonia (Belgium), Castilla y Leon (Spain) and Brittany (France). ■

FIND OUT MORE


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


Connecting European Cyber Valleys


CYBER Interreg Europe


 An interregional cooperation project to enhance public policies for the competitiveness of cybersecurity companies

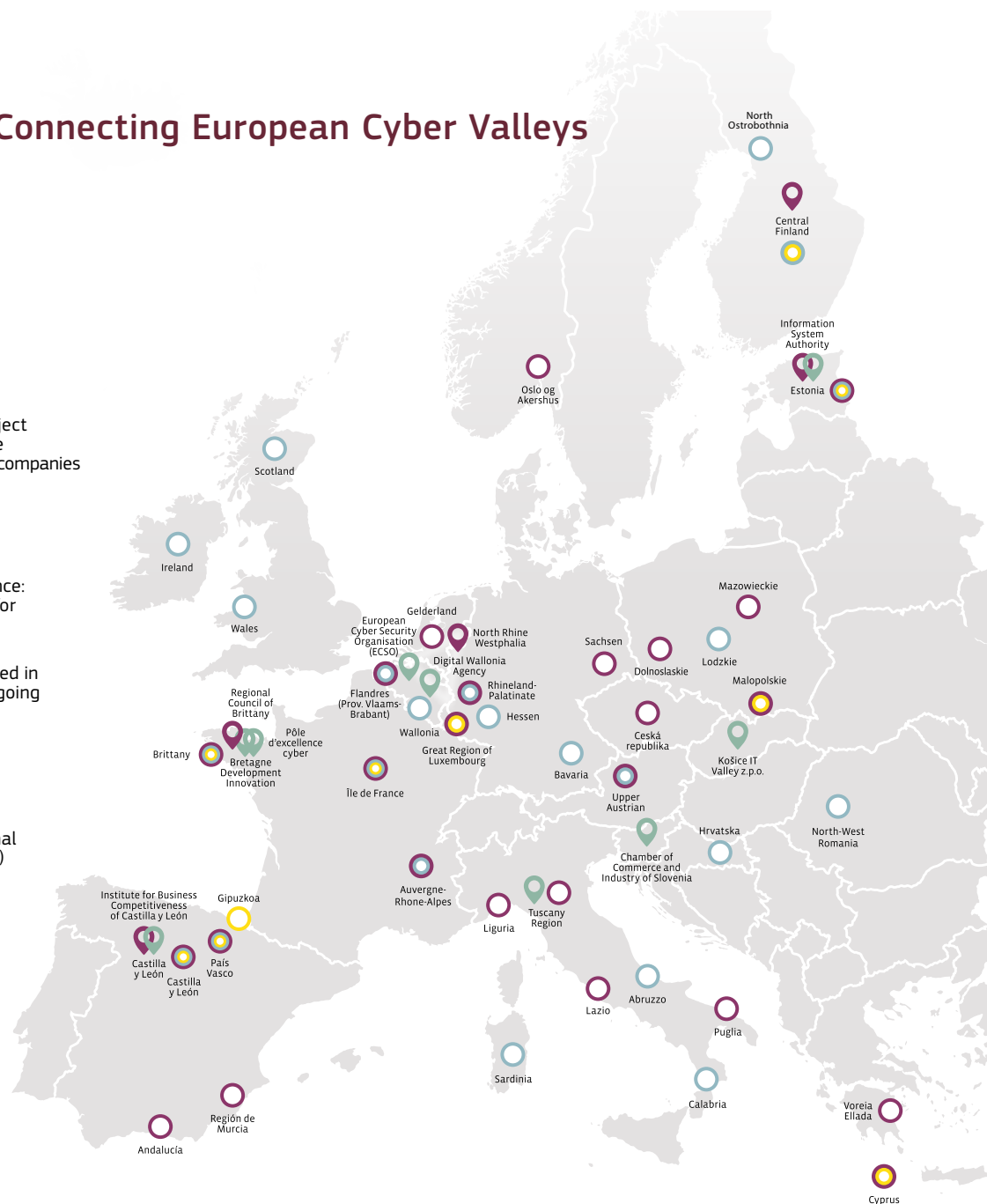
European Cyber Valleys: Pilot action

 Resilience, Deterrence and Defence: Building a strong cybersecurity for the European Union

 Digital Innovation Hubs specialised in cybersecurity (established or ongoing process based on JRC database)

 Smart specialisation or regional strategy on cyber security

 ECSO Regional members (Regional authorities and regional clusters)





London, United Kingdom



Milan, Italy



The Hague, The Netherlands

Transforming a city's vision into reality with financial instruments

The Multi-region assistance programme (MRA) is one of the strands of fi-compass, the platform for advisory services on financial instruments under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) provided by the European Commission in partnership with the European Investment Bank. The objective of MRA projects – which involve at least two managing authorities from different EU Member States – is the assessment of the possible use of ESIF financial instruments in specific thematic areas of common interest. The aim is to facilitate a broader use of financial instruments both in terms of ESI Funds invested and their geographical or thematic scope, as well as to encourage regions from different Member States to co-operate, exchange best practices and engage in mutual learning.

Cities at the heart of EU policy

More than 70 % of European citizens live in urban areas and this is set to increase in the future. Every day, cities across Europe tailor their urban development plans to address the most pressing challenges, such as

a growing population, climate change and digital transformation. By developing comprehensive strategies and defining long-term policy goals, cities are taking action to support affordable housing, promote projects in energy efficiency, revitalise neighbourhoods and improve public transport. But strategic plans can only be successfully implemented if cities have access to financing. Without the strong involvement of public and private capital, it remains difficult to transform a city's vision into reality.

In 2013, the Dutch city of The Hague decided to commit EUR 4 million to a pilot project named JESSICA to establish a financial instrument for energy efficiency. At the time, those involved may not have expected that, within four years, they would have a holding fund with over EUR 46 million in assets for innovation, sustainability and urban development.

However, the first steps to create the fund were challenging.

“When we were initially setting up the fund, we had many questions and had to overcome many technical hurdles to establish a solid and secure foundation for future investments,” recalls William van den Bungelaar, secretary of The Hague Economic Investment Holding Fund Foundation (HEID).

The Hague now has a team of expert practitioners who work closely with their independent fund manager to monitor and support the financial instruments in the city. Because of the success of HEID, financial instruments are now commonly used in the funding of the city's strategic priorities.

Revolving investments around Europe

To build on their existing knowledge of financial instruments, The Hague joined forces with three other European cities – Manchester, Milan and London – on an MRA project called Revolving Investments in Cities in Europe, or RICE. This project aimed at furthering the development of new financial instruments to increase private sector investment in urban development, in particular in relation to smart cities. It established the common financing needs of cities, thus identifying those sectors in which financial instruments can best support projects aligned with a city's policy priorities. The sectors with the largest financing needs encompass transport, energy, housing and workspace, green and blue infrastructure or economic development in a broader sense, which includes SMEs and start-ups, as well as the development of new commercial or innovation facilities.

MRA-RICE partners were able to draw on the experience of the different cities involved.

“The use of financial instruments in Manchester is a success story and their benefits have been far-reaching,” says Mark Duncan from the Manchester City Council. Similarly, Binal Cadieu of the Greater London Authority touts the potential of the new financial instrument known as the Mayoral Energy Efficiency Fund (MEEF) that was set up in London. “As a revolving Fund, MEEF offers us a model for leveraging millions of pounds of private investment for low carbon projects,” Cadieu says.

RICE blueprint city fund

The RICE project delivered a city fund model that can be adapted to the specific needs of cities across the European Union to support urban development. With a blueprint incorporating the best practices observed among RICE partners, the fund is flexible. In a nutshell, it is “a city-led financial instrument, independently managed, with an investment strategy aligned to the city's strategic priorities that achieves significant leverage of the public investment”.

RICE project manager van den Bungelaar underlines the partnership's benefits.

“The blueprint sets out a flexible framework for an urban development financial instrument that achieves significant

leverage of the public investment together with a package of technical assistance to support implementation,” he says. “The model is designed to be simple, replicable and adaptable so that it can be adopted by others as the basis of an urban development financial instrument.”

While the involvement of an independent fund manager drives its implementation, the development of an urban investment strategy is led by the cities. Through the creation of the city fund, European cities have the opportunity to operationalise their vision and strategy.

Tapping into Cohesion Policy support

Public resources such as ESIF play a crucial role in addressing market gaps, enabling many projects to access EU funding that would otherwise be unavailable or too expensive. Where cities have access to ESIF resources, they can successfully implement financial instruments that are targeted to their local needs, successfully mobilising other public and private investment into projects. This can be done either through loans and guarantees for long-term urban projects, equity or quasi-equity for investments into projects with a higher risk profile, or a combination of repayable and grant support.

Numerous cities do not have extensive experience in setting up city funds. Therefore, they need professional support in designing and establishing new financial instruments. Technical assistance programmes supported by the European Commission such as the MRA make it easier to prepare and implement a new city fund by helping cities to build their own capacity.

“For those cities new to the world of financial instruments such as Urban Development Funds, the MRA-RICE project offers a useful tool to embark on the development of a new financial instrument and to assess its feasibility in a local context,” says Lucia Scopelliti who works for the municipality of Milan. ■



FIND OUT MORE

www.fi-compass.eu

NEWS [IN BRIEF]



BACK ON THE URBAN AGENDA

The Urban Agenda for the EU brochure highlights the diversity and variety of actions and achievements to date. The Urban Agenda for the EU is an innovative urban policy initiative which has put multi-level governance into action. It has enabled cities, Member States, the European Commission and

other key stakeholders to come together to jointly tackle pressing urban matters and deliver concrete outputs for the benefit of EU citizens. The brochure emphasizes the role of the Urban Agenda for the EU in building innovative and good governance, working in a more integrated way addressing cross-cutting issues, and in implementing the UN New Urban Agenda. It includes a range of 'action stories' and examples of actions supporting better regulation, better funding and better knowledge.

There is scope to further reinforce urban policy in the EU through stronger and closer cooperation between cities, Member States and the EU. This is where the Urban Agenda for the EU is making a concrete and positive contribution. It is an 'umbrella' for all urban policy initiatives, helping to strengthen urban policy at all levels, from city to Member State to the EU. In the brochure, the reader will also be taken through the multiple EU programmes and initiatives addressing sustainable urban development. ■

FIND OUT MORE

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/urban_agenda_eu_en.pdf

THE ROAD TRIP RETURNS

Last year's Road Trip Project was an enormous online success, attracting thousands of views and followers. This year's edition will feature two new routes, taking two new teams of travellers on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure across the continent and beyond. All of this in a mini-van – of course!

The teams will hit the road and travel from the end of August until end of September, crossing dozens of regions throughout Europe, engaging with and living like the locals, and visiting EU-funded projects along the way. Their mission is not only to explore Europe in a different way but also to discover another side of themselves.

Divided into two teams of four, one team will go from Sweden to the Canary Islands while the other will travel from Ireland to Cyprus. Each team will have a video maker, a copywriter, a photographer and a presenter. They will document all of their travels and share highlights on the project website and social media. ■

FIND OUT MORE

Applications are open from 24 June. Check out our website and social media for updates:

<https://roadtripproject.eu/>



REPORTING MADE SIMPLER FOR INTERREG EUROPE PROJECTS



Interreg Europe is now refunding an important part of its fourth call projects through a lump sum against proof that activities were done. This new, simpler process means that projects no longer have to provide invoices to receive payment, saving them the first-level control costs. Projects can then focus entirely on content and concentrate more resources on actual activities. This change makes the projects more cost-effective.

What spurred the changes? Regulations prepared by the European Commission and approved by EU Member States – such as the Omnibus regulation – removed the EUR 100 000 limit for lump sums. According to Petra Geitner, Head of the Finance and Audit Unit: ‘The regulation gave us the signal to simplify our processes more than we already do and make financing through simplified cost options more a standard than the exception.’

This isn’t the first time Interreg Europe has simplified the way it does things. Years ago, the programme introduced a flat rate for administration costs, a lump sum for preparation costs and reduced control levels. Erwin Siweris, the Programme Director,

said: ‘We finance more than 2 000 partners in 258 projects with a relatively small budget of EUR 359 million. This means we need to be innovative and streamline our processes. We are often among the frontrunners in simplification at the EU level and many of our ideas have been picked up by the Commission and other cooperation programmes.’

The team is eager to explore the benefits of off-the-shelf options or financing based on milestone achievements through new regulations. Let’s see what they come up with next!

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme, co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It supports projects improving regional development policies through exchanges of experience among EU regions. ■

FIND OUT MORE

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



Bringing fast internet to Europe's regions

The economic competitiveness of regions, and notably rural regions, depends on good connectivity. This means not just roads and railways, but also internet highways.

In the words of Rudolf Niessler, Director for Smart and Sustainable Growth at DG REGIO: 'Broadband, particularly in rural areas, contributes to the growth of population and the creation of high-quality jobs'. It is paramount, therefore, that rural areas are not left behind.

The digital gap

However, the statistics show that despite significant efforts by the EU and most Member States, the gap between rural and urban connectivity remains. Connectivity in Europe has grown steadily over the last few years, reaching over 80% of the population. But, if we disaggregate the data, we can see that this percentage drops to less than 50% in rural areas, and the gap does not appear to be closing in order to reach the objectives of the [Digital Agenda by 2020](#).

The action plan for rural broadband

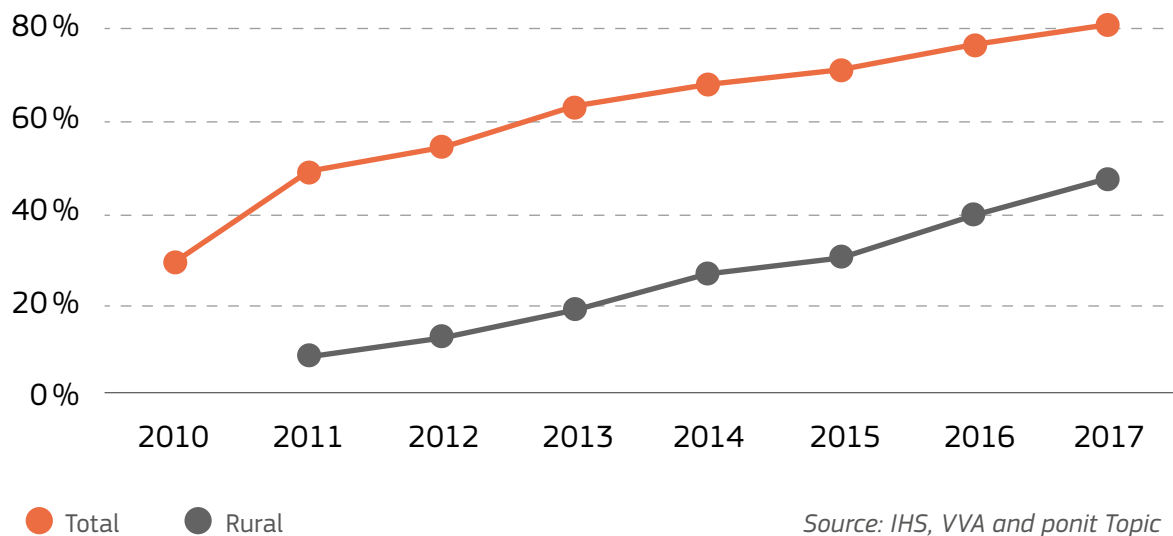
In light of the above, the European Commission has put in place an [Action Plan for Rural Broadband](#). A crucial aspect

of this initiative is the cross-services approach between different European Commission services dealing with regional development, rural development and digital policy.

The action plan has six components, all aiming to ensure that broadband is brought to rural areas:

- > Setting up the Broadband Competence Offices (BCO) Network.
- > Deploying 'broadband missions' to Member States and regions with low levels of rural broadband coverage.
- > Designing a common methodology for planning, reporting and monitoring broadband investments.
- > Introducing a rural proof test.
- > Updating the European Commission's guide to high-speed broadband investment.
- > Designing a rural broadband framework to help implement broadband investment in rural areas.

Next generation Access (NGA) broadband coverage in the EU, 2010-2017



Source: IHS, VVA and ponit Topic

The European Broadband Competence Offices Network

As a first step, the European Commission is supporting the growth and expansion of the Broadband Competence Offices Network. The collaboration and engagement of the different administrations should help overcome some of the hurdles encountered in many regions concerning the administrative

capacity and expertise on broadband. One crucial element is to connect the BCOs with rural stakeholders. Indeed, a recent survey has shown that less than 20% of them are in touch with the Rural Development Network in their country. Only by connecting BCOs to the main actors dealing with specific hurdles encountered at rural level can the digital divide be addressed.



WHAT IS THE BCO NETWORK?

The European Commission called on Member States to create a network of Broadband Competence Offices to address common issues.

They should act as single points of contact on broadband issues, notably:

- > Regulatory
- > Technical
- > Finance

BCOs are established in all Member States and many regions. <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/bco-network-directory>



“Broadband, particularly in rural areas, contributes to the growth of population and the creation of high-quality jobs.”

In 2019, DG REGIO and DG AGRI will introduce a rural proof test. This will imply that any Managing Authority wishing to reprogramme EU funds that had originally been foreseen for broadband will need to prove that rural coverage will be assured in some other way. This will ensure that funds are not taken away from the areas with the greatest need simply because ‘they are challenging’.

The European Commission is currently working on two guides that will give project planners and investors concrete guidance on developing their broadband projects: an updated [Broadband Investment Guide](#) and a guide on rural investments, due to be published in the second half of 2019.

Next steps

The rural-urban digital gap is a reality that will not be overcome in the short term. Thus, the European Commission remains committed to supporting BCOs throughout the EU and to allocating resources in the coming financial period. This will be done notably through the European Regional Development Fund and Connecting Europe Facility but also through new instruments such as the Connecting Europe Broadband Fund (CEBF) or InvestEU.

Member States and regions must now ensure that they have the structures and support schemes in place to enable their rural areas to secure the support they need. ■

FIND OUT MORE

Action Plan: <https://europa.eu/!WU38Xx>
<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/broadband-investment-guide>

Financial support for broadband under the next Multiannual Financial Framework

Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)	Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – Digital	InvestEU
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ERDF: broadband investments under priority objective 3, together with transport and energy infrastructure ■ EAFRD: broadband investment only as part of local development projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ EUR 3 bn ■ Focus on connectivity infrastructure to enable digital transformation ■ Synergies with CEF transport and CEF energy networks within the CEF Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Part of Sustainable Infrastructure Window ■ 11.5 bn guarantee available for broadband investments, but also other infrastructures

PROJECTS

LEARNING THROUGH SIMULATION AT THE VIRTUAL HOSPITAL

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 8855010**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 4084010**

The Lorraine Virtual Hospital (HVL) provides students and health professionals with medical simulation equipment and tools. Responding to the challenge of ‘never for the first time on a patient’, the hospital is supported by the ERDF and run by the University of Lorraine’s Collegium-Santé, which brings together the faculties of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and sports sciences.

Opened in January 2018 on the site of the Nancy University Hospital in France, the HVL provides simulation-based learning for many medical and paramedical health professionals in both hospital services and private practice.

It comprises the CUESIM (University Centre for Training by Simulation), the CESU (Emergency Care Teaching Centre), the School of Surgery, Odontology (forensic dentistry), MéMoSim’S (Centre of Expertise in Metrology, Modelling and Simulation in Health and Sports), and a hospital pharmacy for internal use. There is also a care area with beds and a simulation platform for managing high infection risks.

Learning through simulation has many advantages. Students and healthcare professionals can develop technical and behavioural skills before carrying them out on actual patients.

Training can proceed at their own pace, in a more independent manner and with greater safety, for example when handling toxic products. They are able to gain experience in automated techniques, and can self-assess by being filmed and then debriefed, as well as through virtual reality and interactive ‘serious games’.

Different professions learn to work better together, moving away from ‘compartmentalised’ training. Ultimately, patients

will benefit as health professionals can focus more effectively on the patient, be attentive to their needs, and provide them with better support.

Fostering start-ups

The virtual hospital has been instrumental in providing new educational programmes. The first training courses started in 2016 for 1 000 and 1 500 general practitioners, emergency physicians and surgeons. The target figure is 4 000 to 5 000 professionals per year.

Several university degree courses related to the virtual hospital have already opened, and at least 16 shorter professional development courses will also run.

Furthermore, two start-ups linked to the HVL have been launched: one specialises in robotics and the other in nanotechnology. The University of Lorraine is employing around 10 doctoral students as part of this European Regional Development Fund project, and a number of fixed-term contracts have been created for administrative functions.

The HVL is also involved in medical research activities, research and development (expertise in new medical devices), and educational research (developing new simulation tools).

In addition to Collegium-Santé, three organisations support the HVL – the University of Lorraine, the CHRU and the Lorraine Institute of Cancer Research – and it also collaborates with other research hubs and industrial partners. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.hvl.healthcare/>



PROJECTS

NEW SOLUTIONS FOR E-WASTE RECYCLING

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 8 999 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 3 295 560**

The Spanish e-waste management company Ewaste Canarias will allocate ERDF funds to two research and development projects with the aim of identifying new recycling potential in electronic waste.

Ewaste Canarias has positioned itself in an emerging sector and now operates the most up-to-date electronic and electrical equipment waste-treatment plant in the Canary Islands.

It was the first company to treat and convert refrigeration gases using biogas. It has the capacity to handle over 100 different types of devices whilst ensuring the decontamination of 99.8% of greenhouse gases found in waste.

In line with European guidelines, the project is focusing on recovering raw materials with a high level of purity, according to EU standards, and recycling the waste near to the origin of its generation.

Today, during the recycling of refrigeration appliances and electric water heaters, some of the waste must be incinerated – resulting in substantial environmental damage – due to the lack of a recycling alternatives for these devices.

In response, Ewaste Canarias will use European Regional Development Fund support for two specific R&D projects which aim to identify alternative solutions. The goal of the first project is to recover polyurethane foam waste by recycling refrigerators.

The second will attempt to design and develop a new procedure that enables the treatment and decontamination of electric water heaters which are notoriously difficult to recycle.

Skills and jobs

With help from the ERDF, it is hoped that these projects will identify a use for the resulting materials either in other industries or as an absorbent so as to avoid the negative environmental consequences caused by their incineration.

The overall objective of Ewaste is to promote the development and consolidation of a recycled industrial material based on the criteria of quality, innovation, efficiency and respect for the environment. It is hoped the results will boost the diversification of the Canary Islands' economy and promote the creation of highly skilled and well-qualified jobs. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.ewaste.es>

PROJECTS

TACKLING ILLEGAL ANIMAL TRADE ACROSS THE ITALY-AUSTRIA BORDER

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 1 117 300**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 949 700**

Public services in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy and Carinthia, Austria are working together through the Bio-Crime project to prevent the illegal trade in animals. Such trade is endangering human and animal health by facilitating the spread of diseases and threatening economic security and public safety.

The border regions of north-east Italy and southern Austria are on the transit route for the illegal trade in pets (mainly dogs, cats and birds), mostly from countries in eastern Europe. This illegal practice can help spread zoonoses – infectious diseases, such as rabies or avian chlamydiosis – which are transferred between animals and humans.

This transnational crime also has negative impacts for animal health and welfare, market protection (for national breeders), consumer fraud, and the possible use of zoonotic pathogens in bioterrorism.

The Bio-Crime team has enabled joint responses, sharing of data, and training and education programmes for both the authorities concerned and the wider public. Digital innovations were an important aspect of the project, which was supported by the European Regional Development Fund.

A strong network of cooperation has been set up among the public authorities, including health services, police, customs and the judiciary, to ensure the project remains sustainable.

Bio-Crime organised a series of training courses on animal disease risks, prevention and animal handling for more than 1 000 Italian and Austrian officials and police officers. Joint operational protocols were developed, and joint cross-border inspections were carried out, resulting in a lower crime rate.

Common epidemiological surveillance facilitated better access to data and more data-sharing. A faster and more coordinated response across the different services was also achieved, thanks to a real-time system for alerting officials to serious cross-border threats. Public officials, police and teachers can now benefit from a secure web platform.

Learning curve

As parents often buy pets for their children, educational programmes for children aged 11-13 were developed during the project. A questionnaire in the cross-border region evaluated the children's knowledge before and after they took part in the programme. It indicated that more than 30% of children lacked knowledge of animal-human disease transmission and correct animal handling, which is in line with other EU countries.

In total, 240 children in Carinthia and 200 in Friuli-Venezia Giulia participated, resulting in greater awareness of zoonotic health risks and a final exhibition of their drawings, texts and photographs. Schools from Germany and Slovenia are now involved in the project, too.

Digital communications tailored to the children included a YouTube Bio-crime education channel and short cartoon videos, alongside a public website supported by a web traffic analysis system. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.biocrime.org/>



PROJECTS

NEW TRAINING FOR ENTERPRISING YOUTH MEANS BUSINESS

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 904 830**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 769 110**

The European Regional Development Fund is helping to stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation in the Balkan-Mediterranean region by funding coaching for young people across five European countries.

Budding entrepreneurs in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Albania and North Macedonia are learning new business skills thanks to the 'i3 – Education for ideas, inventions and innovations for entrepreneurship' project. Training and education institutions as well as businesses in these five countries are cooperating to deliver the project's activities and support the growth of new companies.

The need to stimulate economic growth is a common challenge faced by the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The i3 project is helping to address this by establishing a training model which includes a core curriculum as well as a strategy to help implement it.

A total of 250 university and college students and other young people are benefiting from the training, and will also receive mentoring from successful businesspeople.

Training for the future

Pilot testing of five, three-day training modules is taking place in each participating country. Training begins with a general introduction on entrepreneurship followed by spe-

cialisms in one of the following areas: the environment, energy, ICT, lifestyle, and advanced technologies such as robotics and nanotechnology. Each pilot is attended by 50 students who are given the opportunity to visit businesses. They also shadow experienced entrepreneurs who run successful companies.

The first training module was held in Bulgaria, although participants came from all partner countries. Having covered general topics such as business for the benefit of society, the art of communication, and practical mathematics, participants went on to learn about health, working environments, travel and tourism, entertainment, catering, sports and culture.

Details about the i3 model and its training materials have been published in a booklet which will be made available online. The project's results were presented at a fair and conference at Sofia University in Bulgaria to promote the specific training areas and encourage more organisations to get involved.

Looking ahead, the project's long-term goal is to create a recognisable brand of training courses which can promote creative and focused learning opportunities for young people to build their own businesses. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.i-3.eu/>

AGENDA

7-10 OCTOBER

Brussels (BE)

European Week of Regions and Cities

NOVEMBER 2019

Milan (IT)

EUSALP Forum, Milan

NOVEMBER 2019

Brussels (BE)

Smart Regions 3.0

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