



PANORAMA

Focusing on European Regional and Urban Policy

AUTUMN 2020 / No. 74

LATVIA

Building bridges
to strengthen
regional growth

INTERREG:
FOSTERING
GREENING
STRATEGIES



FINALISTS AND
WINNERS AT
REGIOSTARS
2020



PANORAMA

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EDITORIAL

Cohesion on the ground: how to rebuild our societies and economies

Dear readers, welcome to the first digital edition of Panorama. As promised, we are walking the talk: we have become greener in our approach to bring you the best Cohesion Policy stories on the ground. Fittingly for this first sustainable edition of the magazine, which makes the transition between old and new, we find ourselves at yet another crossroad in Europe.

We must heal, repair and rebuild to bounce back from the profound health and economic crisis that has hit us all so hard. However, we cannot rely on the same old model: this is the moment for renovation and reconstruction on a better foundation. We are also looking ahead to the 2021-2027 programming period which must aim for a green, digital and resilient economy catalysed by Cohesion Policy.

The European Commission has put forward a comprehensive framework of instruments: CRII and CRII+ for an emergency response to the crisis, REACT-EU as a flexible repair instrument, and the Recovery Facility to promote the structural reforms needed and our mainstream cohesion programmes for longer-term development.

While I am pleased to see the rapid progress in our work with the co-legislators to adopt REACT-EU, I must say we are facing considerable implementation challenges.

Together with Member States and local stakeholders, we must ensure that the resources provided by all these instruments are channelled into a strong and relevant pipeline of projects which can make a difference on the ground. That means programmes must be drawn up quickly and efficiently. In a few years' time, we must be able to show citizens that we have used their money wisely.

We must make investments in projects which are not just quick absorbers but bear long-term fruit: this is an investment policy, not a consumption policy.

Secondly, this mix of instruments needs to fit into a sound and coherent long-term European and national strategy. Not only do we need wise and long-term investments, but they must also be coherent with our collective priorities at the strategic level, while taking into account Member States' differing needs and starting points.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problems and there is a lot of hard work awaiting us – Commission, co-legislators, Member States, managing authorities, regional and local partners and citizens. We must rebuild a climate-neutral, competitive and inclusive Europe and I believe we have every premise to succeed – if we act together. ■

Elisa Ferreira

European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms





Greening: Interreg communication takes a leap forward

Sustainability has become a well-used word in the communications sector, but how often is it actually translated into action? Interreg programmes are picking up the call from the EU institutions to make communication actions greener and more sustainable. To kick-start this approach, a survey was launched to assess the state of play and foster more greening practices in future strategies.

Last year, the European institutions pushed the bar of their climate-related objectives: the EU Parliament declared a 'climate emergency' in Europe and the European Commission launched the EU Green Deal which aims to achieve a carbon-neutral continent by 2050.

To respond to these concerns, a group of European cooperation programmes sent out a survey and collected communication activity practices from Interreg programmes. The aim was to present the overall state of play and to share their projects' environmental practices and their own communication activities to show the extent of greening among them.

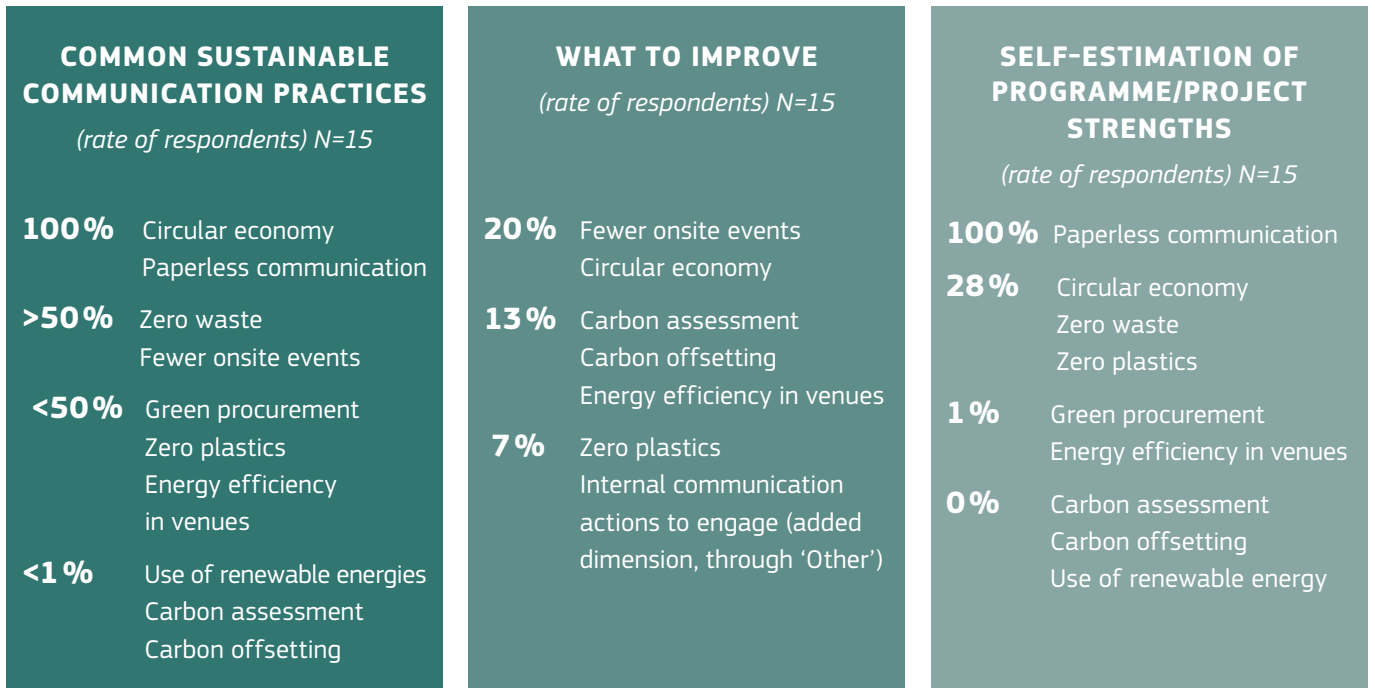
The survey was launched in May 2020 and collected green practices from 15 Interreg programmes.

Replies show that paperless communication and the use of circular economy practices (reusing the same materials or using recycled materials) are already widely spread (see the table below) in programmes such as the Poland-Russia CBC Programme, Interreg Danube and Interreg SUDOE. Some programmes or project partners no longer produce giveaways and many avoid using plastic in their activities.

However, other areas still need improvement, and a few remain almost untapped. Green procurement, waste reduction especially with plastics, and implementing online events are among the areas of improvement, whereas assessing and offsetting GHG emissions is still rare among programmes.



SURVEY RESULTS:



A closer look at the current practices can be seen in the summary next page:

Management practices across programmes and projects

Rather than simply limiting sustainable communications to the programme, implementing a systematic management approach covering both the programme and its funded projects is of greater significance. The Interreg Alpine Space

Programme developed full guidance on greening for their co-financed projects. Internally, the joint secretariat team members signed a 'Self-commitment declaration on reducing the carbon footprint of their professional activities'. Furthermore, the desire for a greener programme was expressed by the partner states in the programme mission statement.

The Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia is an interesting example of the joint efforts of five projects. In 2019, the programme allocated additional funds to projects part-funded under Priority Axis 2 'Cooperating for implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans'. Those projects are still running the 'capitalisation and communication' methodology, whereby they planned several communication activities as if they were one single project.

Online events promote greater efficiency

Online events are one of the most efficient ways to reduce the carbon footprint, especially when in normal circumstances programmes and projects organise thousands of on-site events every year.

In recent years, the Interreg Europe programme has produced almost 100 hours of content for online events targeting regional policymakers. Different technologies, forms and formats have been tested and used to make those online events interesting and useful for the participants. ➤



The programme team started the implementation of online events. The members received training and in no time their efforts began to pay off with, for example, more participants attending virtual events than physical ones.

Carbon offsetting is possible

Although offsetting the carbon footprint seems complex, two projects have shown it can be done.

The BalkanROAD project, funded by the Interreg Balkan Mediterranean Programme, organised a zero-carbon conference: 'OpenEARTH 2020 – Conference on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation'. All participants provided details regarding their travel and accommodation so as to estimate the conference's overall carbon footprint. Calculations were made according to IPCC (International Panel for Climate Change) guidelines and were presented in a poster.

Oak trees were planted to offset the 17.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide produced by the conference. The number of the trees was estimated based on the CO₂ that oak trees accumulate during their lifetime.

Another example comes from the sustainable tourism community of 22 projects, funded by the Interreg MED Programme. They held a convention applying in full the circular economy principles and offsetting part of the 78 tonnes of CO₂ generated by the event. Participants were also engaged by voting for one of several projects to be the recipient of the offsetting contributions.

Green procurement: engaged suppliers

One of the key areas to introduce systematic green practices is green procurement. During a conference with 400 participants, the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme went beyond procuring standard green catering packages.

As these typically cover 'labelled organic food' but disregard aspects such as local and seasonal production, the programme changed its tendering practice by splitting the catering into smaller lots (daytime and evening). This enabled smaller companies with local suppliers to compete. Moreover, each bidding caterer was interviewed to assess his or her individual approach to sustainable catering.



Another example of engaging suppliers comes from the Interreg South Baltic Programme: USB PEN suppliers were asked to drop the single plastic foil in their packaging.

Avoiding catering food waste

According to the Europa website, 20% of food produced for human consumption (or 88 million tonnes) is wasted in Europe. Awareness around food waste remains very low, which is why the STREFOWA project, funded under the Interreg Central Europe Programme, decided to advocate for reducing food waste in Central European regions.

The project is communicating its mission by example. Apart from using zero-waste catering at all their events, STREFOWA organised five food-waste hackathons in Austria, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Czechia, aiming to raise awareness, including among local communities, to find online solutions to support the reduction of food waste in Central Europe.



Go circular in European Cooperation Days

The Interreg Estonia-Latvia Programme follows the green event guidelines developed in their project 'Green Public Events'. The European Cooperation Day events of 2017, 2018 and 2019 were all occasions to raise awareness of these guidelines and put them into practice. For example, they focused on approaches such as waste sorting, using local products and tap water, and making giveaways from recycled and/or sustainable materials.

Greening communication practices were implemented during three European Cooperation Day 2019 celebrations in Pskov, Salaspils and Saint Petersburg, organised by the Latvia-Russia Cross-border Programme. Environment-related events were supported by reusable gifts, souvenirs, name cards, ribbons, pens and other stationery.

All these practices show how the programmes and projects are willing to move forward. Several initiatives are also in the pipeline to build solid guidance to support them in taking more-informed decisions. ■

Interreg's 30-year celebrations focus on young people

As Interreg celebrates its 30th anniversary and prepares for the next programming period, it is seeking crucial input from the next generation on how they can be involved in improving territorial cooperation across Europe.

At the heart of the European project, for the last 30 years Interreg has been supporting cooperation between regions by removing obstacles and promoting joint action to bring citizens closer together.

Interreg's celebrations have focused on three separate but inter-related themes: 'we all have a neighbour', 'youth' and a 'green and climate neutral Europe'.

In 2018, young people aged between 15 and 29 made up 17% of the EU population. Irrespective of their gender, economic situation, social origin or age, all youth face common challenges, such as weak labour markets and a lack of education and training opportunities.

Likewise, young people are not immune from other crises, such as global warming, insecurity and the widespread lack of trust in public institutions. However, their desire for a better future is shared across the continent. The EU as a whole offers them vast opportunities, especially for the increasing number who are venturing across borders for work or leisure.

Making positive moves

Interreg helps people to commute from one Member State to another, to find jobs in the border regions of Europe and beyond, and to access the public services closest to their homes. Indeed, enabling youth mobility is crucial to strengthening Europe's position as a knowledge-based economy.

It promotes networks and activities to help young entrepreneurs to develop their skills, thereby unlocking their unexploited potential. This also creates an enabling environment to transform their innovative ideas into reality. Interreg educates young people within and outside the



“ Interreg ensures the involvement of citizens and young people in building our continent. ”

Union to make them aware of global warming and to adapt their habits towards a more sustainable way of life. It builds trust and confidence across borders by establishing common public services that young people can easily access. The [IEER](#) and [Eur. Friends](#) projects from the Interreg Europe and Meuse-Rhine programmes, respectively, illustrate some of these features.

Striking the right balance

2020 marks a pivotal year for Interreg. While we celebrate our achievements over the last 30 years, we are also at a crucial juncture as we prepare for a new programming period. Interreg is open to new and innovative ideas from young people across the Union. With this in mind, the European Commission has carried out targeted surveys and online group discussions with youth connected with the European territorial cooperation world (i.e. EU and its neighbouring countries).

The results of these exchanges form the basis of a ‘Manifesto by young people for a better territorial cooperation in Europe’ which was presented to Elisa Ferreira, EU Commissioner for Cohesion Policy and Reform, and the German Presidency of the EU Council at the Interreg Annual Event in Brussels on 15 October.



In response, Commissioner Ferreira said: ‘Interreg ensures the involvement of citizens and young people in building our continent. Not only does cooperation policy need the voice of civil society to shape the future, but Interreg will also continue to support projects that will enable the next generation to live in a continent full of opportunities, by promoting employment, university exchanges, and equal access to quality services along borders.’

This manifesto, which is available on [DG REGIO website](#), gives voice to young people’s ideas on Interreg and especially on how to bring it more in line with their expectations. It is mainly addressed to policymakers at the EU, national, regional and local level, as well as to Interreg Managing Authorities and project beneficiaries, organisations interested in EU cohesion – and especially Interreg – policy-making, youth, citizens’ engagement and democratic participation. ■



FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/!yB96wx>

“Interreg Volunteer Youth”

IVY welcomes over 500 young volunteers to territorial cooperation

Since its launch in March 2017, the Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) initiative has involved more than 500 volunteers. All over Europe, hundreds of youngsters support Interreg programmes and projects, raising visibility on territorial cooperation in the EU and its neighbouring countries.

At the same time, IVY has given very many young people the opportunity to learn about and better understand the goals and challenges of the European project. Promoted by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, the initiative is managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) within the framework of the European Solidarity Corps.

Working with IVY, volunteers support, promote and report the concrete achievements of the Interreg programmes and projects in which they are hosted.

Myrto Vergou, who volunteers for the project ‘Environmental Management Enhancement by Youth-run SMEs’, under the Interreg Greece-Bulgaria programme, says: ‘I have learned a lot about the interregional relations of

Greece and Bulgaria, our common interests and how we can help each other. I have a clear image now about our strengths and weaknesses and I hope that with my work I will inform [...] other people.’

To date, 41 Interreg programmes and 165 Interreg projects have welcomed volunteers, underlining the significant impact IVY is having. In 2021, IVY will continue its work to enable young people to take part in European territorial cooperation and to empower them to undertake solidarity and collaboration ventures.



Myrto Vergou has a clear view on how to get the best from interregional relations.



IVY in action

Since 2019, Interreg volunteers have also had the opportunity to organise events on behalf of DG REGIO to raise awareness of Cohesion Policy – the so-called Citizens' Engagement Activities (CEA). Volunteers have organised 23 such events so far, arranging activities for citizens and involving the local community with a view to informing people about the many benefits of European regional policy.

CEAs organised in 2019 included collecting rubbish in the Pyrenees, sports competitions in Naujoji Akmenė in Lithuania, canoeing down the River Venta river in Latvia and Lithuania, a cocoa workshop in Guadeloupe, hiking in Germany's Grumsin forest, and a youth workshop in Slovenia. Nature lovers, sports enthusiasts, children and chocolate lovers – everyone was able to learn about Cohesion Policy while enjoying their favourite activities.

Solidarity across borders

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the IVY initiative following the closure of borders and a complete lockdown in some countries. Reacting to the situation, DG REGIO and AEER allowed remote volunteering for those volunteers already deployed and paused those about to start when most countries introduced strict measures to limit the spread of infection.

However, host organisations and volunteers coordinated smoothly and continued collaborating throughout this period, and mobility periods started as soon as it was safe to travel within the EU.

To celebrate the role of young people in territorial cooperation, the European Commission has involved IVY volunteers in many events dedicated to Interreg's 30th anniversary, capitalising on their experiences to learn about the desires and expectations of young Europeans concerning the future of territorial cooperation.

With this in mind, DG REGIO launched a survey to collect their ideas on how to improve Interreg in the future and included the results in a manifesto that was presented to Commissioner Elisa Ferreira during the Interreg Annual Meeting.

With this extraordinary effort, made possible by the long-standing and fruitful involvement of young people in Interreg, thanks to IVY, the European Commission is sending an important message to the next generation: solidarity is at the core of the EU and this value must be cherished and shared to build our future together. ■



FIND OUT MORE

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

Celebrating Interreg at 30 along the Estonia-Latvia border

In 2008, the first cooperation project between the two countries was supported by the Interreg Estonia-Latvia programme. Since then, 119 successful cooperation projects have facilitated the creation of great partnerships and neighbourly cooperation across the borders.

Collaboration has focused on business development and product development by SMEs working in IT, food, wood, pharma, space and other sectors. Enhancing labour mobility, environmental awareness, heritage-based tourism and small yachting harbours has brought together dozens of state and municipal institutions, businesses and NGOs.

While celebrating 30 years of Interreg in Estonia and Latvia in 2020, we have focused on neighbours, green topics and involving youth – all integrated into several joint activities reflecting the number 30 as a challenge!

Have you ever tried to answer **30 questions** about Interreg and Estonia and Latvia? Did you know that keep.eu includes the most comprehensive information about all Interreg

projects? In September 2020, only the most experienced project managers and dedicated programme enthusiasts could provide correct answers to the online quiz 'In the celebration of Interreg 30'.

30 km for Interreg 30. Have you ever celebrated something while hiking 30 km? Also in September, 50 Estonians and Latvians, many young people among them, celebrated cooperation and nature by walking along the eastern side of Cēsis city in the Gauja National Park in Latvia on a special route mapped out for Interreg 30.

30 trees for Interreg 30. Have you ever celebrated the birthday of Interreg and European Cooperation Day on the Estonia-Latvia border? On 19 September, Estonia-Latvia programme implementers did just that by making the newly built EU twin cities' Valga-Valka joint centre greener by planting 30 trees. ■



Survey updates views on cooperation across EU borders

A major survey on cross-border cooperation published by the European Commission shows greater interaction and higher levels of trust among border communities.

The Oresund Bridge between Denmark and Sweden.

The findings of a major cross-border cooperation survey, conducted on behalf of the European Commission by Gallup International between February and April 2020, were unveiled by Commissioner Ferreira on 15 October.

This survey focuses on cooperation between adjacent NUTS III border regions in at least two different EU Member States and/or some countries outside the EU. It was carried out in the border regions covered by the Interreg cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes of the 27 EU Member States, Andorra, Lichtenstein, the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland.

It is a follow-up to the first edition which was carried out in 2015. The survey explores the same range of topics, namely: awareness of CBC programmes, cross-border mobility, attitudes towards citizens from neighbouring countries (cross-border experience), and obstacles to CBC between border regions.

Awareness of cross-border cooperation programmes

Awareness of EU regional policy-funded cross-border activities has declined by 7 percentage points (pp) since 2015. Only 24% of respondents who reside in the border regions covered by Interreg CBC programmes have heard of any EU-funded cross-border cooperation activities in their area.

Among the 54 Interreg programmes, this level of awareness ranges from 51% (Slovenia-Hungary) to as low as 11% (Lithuania-Poland). Undoubtedly, this is a disappointing result although it gives the European Commission the impetus to step up its communication efforts in the future, in partnership with national and regional authorities involved in CBC.

Cross-border mobility

Cross-border mobility has improved since 2015, reaching 56% (+3pp) of citizens living in EU border regions. Of those respondents living in EU border regions, 79% have travelled to the neighbouring country at least once, an increase of +3pp compared to the previous edition. Overall, of the six different reasons evaluated for cross-border travel, travel for leisure activities including tourist visits (58%, +14pp) is cited as the most important reason by respondents, followed by travel to shop for goods or services (34%, +8pp).

One in five (22%) have travelled to a neighbouring country to visit friends, while 16% have done so for work or business purposes and 15% to visit family. Respondents are least likely to have travelled to a partner country to use public services (10%). The highest mobility rates were measured in the Ireland-United Kingdom [PEACE] (81%, +4pp) and Austria-Germany/Bavaria (76%, +2pp) programmes. The proportion of respondents who have been abroad to countries

covered by an Interreg CBC programme running in their region has increased since 2015, whatever the reason. More specifically, travelling for leisure activities, including tourism, has increased most since the previous edition (+14pp), followed by travel to shop for goods and services (+8pp).

Attitudes towards citizens of neighbouring countries are generally more positive

The positive attitudes towards citizens of neighbouring countries measured in 2015 have been confirmed in 2020. A large majority of people living in EU border regions would feel comfortable about having a citizen from another country covered by an Interreg CBC programme as a neighbour (91%), work colleague (89%), family member (88%) or manager (82%). All these proportions have increased slightly, albeit from a very high base (by +1 or +2pp) since 2015. Moreover, two-thirds of respondents (66%) agree that most people can be trusted, with 19% strongly agreeing and 47% somewhat agreeing. This represents a slight increase (+5pp) in the total level of trust in other people expressed since the previous edition.

Strong disparities can be observed when looking at the results at the programme level: the highest proportions of social trust can be observed in the programmes involving the Nordic countries: Sweden-Norway (89%), Sweden-Denmark-Norway (87%), Sweden-Finland-Norway (86%), and Sweden-Finland-Norway (84%). Conversely, less than half of respondents agree in the following programmes: Greece-Cyprus, Slovakia-Hungary and Slovakia-Czechia (all 44%), Greece-Bulgaria (45%) and Slovenia-Hungary (48%).

Obstacles to cross-border cooperation

In line with the previous edition, respondents are more likely to consider living in a border region as an opportunity (38%) than an obstacle (3%). Of the six potential obstacles investigated, language differences (52%) and legal and administrative differences (44%) remain the most-mentioned obstacles to CBC. However, these proportions have decreased, by -5pp and -2pp, respectively since the previous edition. Thirdly, 41% consider that social and economic differences represent a problem for cooperation between their country and its partner country or countries, which corresponds to a -5pp decrease since the previous edition. The fourth reason, mentioned by about one third of respondents (32%), is cultural differences (stable since 2015).

OBSTACLES TO CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Language differences: **52%**



Legal and administrative differences: **44%**

Social and economic differences: **41%**



Cultural differences: **32%**

Accessibility: **30%**



Finally, less than 3 in 10 respondents (30%) consider that accessibility (for example, geographical barriers or transport infrastructure) represents a problem for cooperation between their country and its partner country or countries. This proportion has remained stable since the previous edition. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://europa.eu/cw77bW>



Adriatic-Ionian Region

A true example for Europe and beyond



The yearly rotating Presidency of the EU Strategy of the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) gives each of the nine participating countries, in turn, the opportunity to steer priorities and guide the way ahead. On 1 June 2020, Slovenia took over the chairmanship from Serbia, aiming to successfully embed the EUSAIR flagship projects and to green it towards a sustainable, competitive and socially inclusive economic macro-region.

From 1 June 2020 to 31 May 2021, Slovenia will be presiding over the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR). I am delighted by the fact that, over the last few years, our colleagues, together with partners from various institutions across the region, have succeeded in forging an exemplary partnership that facilitates confidence building in this fascinating part of Europe.

Today, it is vital to preserve this confidence. Although we have all suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also learned a very important lesson: we can only win by working together.

We got off to a successful start with the governing board adopting EUSAIR flagship projects for the period 2021-2027. It is crucial that all stakeholders jointly agree on the

macro-regional priorities to be embedded in the ensuing programming documents supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds and the IPA III strategic framework.

This goal, already set out in the 2018 Catania Declaration, was finally achieved at the 12th EUSAIR governing board meeting on 10 June 2020. After two years of intensive work in the EUSAIR governance structure and, in particular, in four thematic steering groups, the final list of macro-regional priorities was adopted.

Our colleagues in all EUSAIR countries, as well as European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira and Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, have already been informed about the extensive list of projects. Jointly agreed macro-regional priority actions are among the undertakings in which we should spare no effort to ensure political, economic, legal and financial convergence, despite the current crisis.

Focusing on the Green Deal

The key concept underpinning the Slovenian presidency 2020-2021 is 'EUSAIR greening'. Here is a summary of Slovenia's four main arguments for such a strategic decision.

The Green Deal is one of the priorities of the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework.



Within EUSAIR, together with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia is responsible for coordinating the environmental quality pillar.

As an EU Member State since 2004, Slovenia has always been a staunch supporter of EU enlargement in south-eastern Europe. We firmly believe that in this process environmental standards are as important as economic and democratic standards.

Last but not least, post COVID-19 recovery on our continent and across the world can only be green. We live in a magnificent region with beautiful coastlines and hinterland. In these times, solidarity and efficient multilateral and regional cooperation are all the more important, and our Adriatic-Ionian region can serve as a true example for Europe and beyond.

Over the past few months, based on the consensus of the countries involved, we have been able to identify the topics

of specific project proposals and establish the foundation for tackling key challenges in terms of the region's future concerning blue growth, connectivity, the environment, and tourism.

We are determined to bring together the knowledge and innovation available in the region. This is what drives and guides us. The Adriatic-Ionian Region can only be resilient if the people living there feel strong and connected. ■



Anže Logar

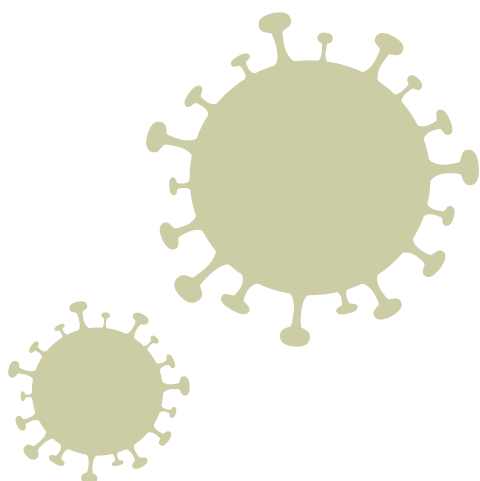
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia



The salt pans in Slovenia's Sečovlje Salina Nature Park celebrate a centuries-old tradition.

Funding SMEs in the green and digital transition, post-COVID-19

We are going through stormy times in rough seas, facing an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis. Small and medium-sized enterprises have been hit hard. Together with Member States, the European Commission has responded to these emerging needs in a very flexible way by adapting EU legislation and facilitating financing for European businesses to help them stay alive.




In order to achieve a recovery and a strong and inclusive economy, it is clear that we need to restart economic growth rapidly. It is also obvious that we must become a stronger, more resilient and inclusive society. The challenge is to design tailored financial and practical support for economic growth based on the twin objectives of a green and digital transition to rebuild convergence across all EU countries.

The objective is to invest in businesses to help them grow and to create shared value. The EU funds aim to support businesses to engage in innovative solutions for social challenges that coincide with prosperity and business goals.

Some enterprises have explored the boundary between purpose and profit, to do the right thing and simultaneously build a business case to make it happen. Both public and private companies can serve a social purpose as well as maximising on the profit. Business decisions have an impact on workers, customers, suppliers, the community, and the environment. Enterprises have to play an active role in the green and digital transition.





“ A combination of financial instruments and grants can deploy the advantages offered by both delivery tools which could become a very effective financing mechanism for the green and digital transition.”

Katerina Fortun, policy analyst, DG REGIO

Ambition and innovation

In the current crisis, entrepreneurs need security and financial and practical support even more. The present situation also provides us with an opportunity to reimagine the way businesses work. The goal of EU funding is to motivate and support entrepreneurs to implement more ambitious changes and innovative business models that maximise the profit and create shared value. So, what is the best tool to deliver this – loans or grants?

On the one hand, financial instruments such as loans, guarantees and equity, are an opportunity for both public and private collaboration, paving the way to catalyse private capital into impactful investing. Financial demands are big and government debts have reached record highs to address the COVID-19 crisis. Public money might not be enough. EU funds' financial instruments can trigger private investment by sharing the risk with investors with the aim of enhancing funding for entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, SMEs have been taking harder hits. EU grants might provide the necessary support to rebuild and to implement new business models in such times of uncertainty.

Putting these 'hands' together can create a new opportunity. A combination of financial instruments and grants can deploy the advantages offered by both delivery tools which could become a very effective financing mechanism for the green and digital transition.

Delivering economic growth

Entrepreneurs might also need this practical support when adapting business models to do well by doing good. Advisory, assistance and capacity-building roles are crucial components of successful financial instruments to further increase the funding's efficiency and effectivity.

Combined with grants, these financial instruments can provide tailored financial and practical support for recovery and growth based on the twin objectives of a green and digital transition. Purpose-driven enterprises will be essential contributors to an economy that works for people and delivers jobs, growth and investment.

By reimagining the way businesses work, we can help to solve the great problems of our time. We have the capacity, the technology, and the resources to build a strong and resilient society – and in doing so, to create economic growth. ■

Latvia en route to a knowledge-based economy and inclusive growth

Situated in the Baltic Region of northern Europe, Latvia is a country which is proud of its rich cultural heritage and beautiful nature. Since its accession to the European Union in 2004, Cohesion Policy funding has been a key element in its economic and social development.

Latvia, one of the three Baltic States, became independent on 18 November 1918. It is bordered by Estonia to the north, Russia to the east, Belarus to the south-east, and Lithuania to the south. Its shores are washed by the Baltic Sea to the west and by the Gulf of Riga to the north.

Almost 2 million people live in the country; its official language is Latvian which is one of the oldest European languages.



Regional disparities and major challenges

In the last 10 years, despite the severe 2007-2009 financial crisis and its consequences, Latvia has experienced stable growth. In 2019, Latvia's GDP per capita measured in purchasing power parities reached 69% of the EU average, compared to 60% in 2008.

Although Latvia is one of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's countries with the biggest disparities in regional development, over the last decade, the fastest growth has been observed in regions outside Riga.

In 2016, in the Riga Planning Region, GDP per capita was EUR 17 213 (135 % of the average GDP per capita in the country), in Kurzeme it was 74%, in Vidzeme 66%, in Zemgale 63%, and in Latgale 51%. Similar regional disparities also exist in business, employment, and income levels, as well as in access to healthcare, social services and quality education.

Over the past decade, the country's population has continued to decline by 1% on average a year, especially among the working-age population, due to both emigration to other EU countries and low birth rates. This trend has exerted a lot of pressure on growth potential, the labour market, and on the country's ability to finance and maintain public infrastructure and services.

Income inequality in Latvia is one of the highest in the EU. The risk of poverty mainly affects pensioners, the disabled, single-parent families, large families and the long-term unemployed.

Impact of the COVID-19 crisis

The recent pandemic has proved to be a challenge for Latvian society and for the capacity of EU funds. The economic crisis caused by the restrictions imposed during the coronavirus pandemic will have a significant impact on Latvia's economy and society. Currently, this is hard to predict as the pandemic's development and further potential effect on the global, EU and Latvian economies remain unclear. The crisis

will lead to restructuring of the international markets and domestic economic structures, which can also offer opportunities for developing the Latvian economy.

Despite the challenges arising from COVID-19, investments from EU funds in the Latvian economy have remained unchanged in 2020. Therefore, in accordance with updated macro-economic forecasts, this year, Latvia's GDP will fall by 7% compared to 2019, while the contribution from EU fund investments will stay at 1.2 percentage points (without such investments, the country's GDP would decline by 8.2%).

In July this year, the European Commission approved amendments (submitted by Latvia) to the Operational Programme which envisaged the reallocation of EU funds to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19. The amendments provided for EUR 386 million of EU funding to be allocated to economic recovery measures – projects which can be quickly implemented.

Primarily, the funds have been allocated to strengthening the capacity of the healthcare system by providing urgent investments in the areas of infectology and psychiatry. They are also intended to support businesses by providing current assets for exporting and manufacturing enterprises, modernising production processes, and strengthening the economy. Furthermore, investments have been directed towards mitigating socio-economic effects by investing in employment measures, as well as in various infrastructure projects. ■



Situated in northern Europe, Latvia extends over 64 559 km². It boasts more than 12 000 rivers and 2 256 lakes, ranking 4th in Europe in terms of fresh-water resources. Most of the landscape comprises fertile lowland plains, with 29% devoted to agriculture and small farms; 56% of the total area is covered by forests. In 2019, the population was 1 919 968 but is declining at around 1% annually, especially among the working-age population.

Economy

Strong GDP growth continued in 2018 as investments and private consumption pushed it over 4%. At 2.6%, inflation remained the same as 2017. Its GDP is projected to decline by 7% in 2020, followed by a fairly rapid recovery in 2021 (EC Spring Economic Forecast).

Latvia is one of the countries benefitting most from EU funds, with investments in research, technological development and innovation, business competitiveness, sustainable transport, employment and mobility. It also receives support to improve its tax administration and healthcare and to develop its capital markets.

Although it is catching up with average EU living standards, significant economic disparities remain between its capital and regions. Riga and its vicinity account for more than half of Latvia's GDP while the regions are poorer and report slower growth.

Low public spending on healthcare, and unhealthy lifestyle choices, are the main reasons for the population's poor health. Additional public financing has improved health services in some regions. The country is close to its renewable energy target for 2020 but must improve energy efficiency.

Labour market

Unemployment rate fell to 7.4% in 2018 with the strong economy drawing more people into the labour market, helping to offset the decline in the working-age population. It reached 9% in mid-summer in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, but started to show slight improvement in August-September.

Overall, labour market performance is positive but employment conditions differ across regions and skill levels; unemployment is significantly higher in regions furthest

from Riga. Most shortages are in sectors related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, including ICT, and in healthcare.

Education, research and innovation

Latvia invests a comparatively high share of its GDP in education (5.5% in 2017, vs. the EU average of 4.7%). However, access to quality education is not equitable, with students in larger secondary schools receiving better quality education than those in small rural schools.

It invests very little in R&D: in 2017, the share was 0.51% of GDP (EU average 2.1%), among the lowest in the EU. However, by 2020, the government aims to increase this to 1.5% of GDP.

Latvia is a moderate innovator with strengths in its ICT infrastructure. But it performs below the EU average in digital skills with 52% of the population lacking basic digital skills.

Trade

Exports performed strongly in 2018, growing by around 3.6%. Machinery and mechanical appliances, electrical equipment and wood articles are the most significant exports. Most Latvian producers are concentrated in low-technology industries where innovation prospects are low. Productivity growth reached 4.7% in 2017, putting Latvia among the top EU countries.

Digital single market

Although Latvia has been an EU frontrunner in fibre and 4G deployment, bridging the urban/rural digital divide remains a challenge as regards fixed broadband coverage.

The use of digital services is widespread and gradually improving but there is a shortage of skilled IT professionals.

More and more Latvians are using internet services, such as internet banking and e-government, and the substantially improved digital public service. However, citizens' digital skills must improve if Latvia is to benefit from an inclusive labour market and improve the productivity of businesses and integration of digital technologies. ■

Wise investments for faster growth

Jānis Reirs, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Latvia, reflects on Latvia's experience in implementing EU funds and outlines its goals for the next programming period.



How successful has Latvia been in implementing EU funds to date?

In the period 2004 to 2018, Latvia received EUR 11.77 billion from the EU budget, while its contribution over the same period was EUR 3.098 billion. Since its accession to the EU, the difference between its GDP and the EU average has fallen significantly. The average contribution of EU funds to GDP growth is 1-1.5% a year, making Latvia one of the most successful EU countries.

EUR 4.4 billion of EU funds available in the current programming period are essential for growing the Latvian economy and have made an invaluable contribution to the growth of GDP and employment. During this period, the main emphasis is on making wise and justified investments to ensure they are efficient, sustainable and cost-effective.

Of note, data from a general population survey in 2019 show that 73% of respondents consider the investment of EU funds in Latvia to be generally successful, a higher rate than in any previous poll since Latvia's accession to the EU.

However, despite the significant growth observed in the past, Latvia remains among the less well-off EU Member States with GDP per capita just 67% of the EU average. Moreover, in Latgale and other regions far from the capital, the depopulation rate is high and GDP per capita is significantly lower.

How is Latvia coping during the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the pandemic, we have been faced with new challenges and a very changing environment. However, this new reality has opened up new

opportunities for us to restructure our economy and adjust to the real-life situation.

So far, Latvia has successfully contained the spread of COVID-19, which means we have fewer restrictions on economic activity. Compared to the previous crisis, this time Latvia has access to EU funds and can make public investments to facilitate economic recovery and society's adaptation to the new situation.

It is important to stress that, despite COVID-19, in 2020, the implementation rates of EU funds have remained at the previous level, creating a positive effect on the country's economic stability.



“ We must think about the wider use of financial instruments ensuring that investments are made in sound projects that lead to cost savings and generate income. ”

Given that Latvia's disparities in regional development are the third largest among the OECD countries, how will you reduce these in the next programming period?

To ensure a sustainable and balanced development of regions, we need integrated investments which, with solutions adapted to each specific location and local situation, will enable the development of services and appropriate infrastructure and improve the quality of life and business environment.

Culture is essential for promoting local development and creating jobs, exports and income as it attracts both local people and tourists. The diversity of cultural and historical heritage in Latvia's regions and the available infrastructure allow us to offer different content and business opportunities.

To tackle problems in regional development, we will focus EU support on implementing integrated development strategies. Our main aim is to develop the support infrastructure necessary for municipalities to provide business and cultural services, ensuring cultural heritage is conserved and protected.

Support is also envisaged for enhancing public services, taking into account changes in the number of inhabitants and introducing smart solutions for municipalities to work efficiently. We will also strengthen the capacity of those involved in developing local areas, improving administrative processes and public spaces.

What are the key challenges for Latvia as regards a low-carbon economy, clean energy and sustainable transport?

In 2017, transport accounted for 41 % of total GHG emissions in Latvia. According to the long-term goal of achieving climate-neutrality by 2050, by 2030, GHG emissions not included in the ETS should be cut by 6% compared to 2005. Sustainable and innovative transport solutions should be developed with more affordable, accessible and climate-friendly mobility alternatives made available.

One European Green Deal goal is to provide a powerful incentive for multi-modal transport to improve the system's efficiency. To reduce congestion and pollution, especially in

urban areas, multi-modal connecting points and cycling infrastructure must be developed.

In Latvia, it is also important to develop the public transport system with railways as its core, ensuring gradual electrification of the railway network and modernisation of the parts already electrified.

What does Latvia hope to achieve in the 2021-2027 programming period?

During the next programming period, Latvia will focus on reforms and investments that increase the productivity of its economy and competitiveness of its businesses while moving towards a knowledge-based economy. This will allow Latvian businesses to benefit from the green and digital transition by developing new products and services. Our goal is to ensure that growth is experienced in all regions by all Latvians.

Given demographic and labour market trends, further catching up with developed countries is only possible if productivity improves significantly. Therefore, investments supporting



business should be viewed through the productivity prism, as should those in all other sectors of the economy, too. We must think about the wider use of financial instruments ensuring that investments are made in sound projects that lead to cost savings and generate income.

The motto of the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2021-2027 is 'Change of public behaviour – a road to development' which means that many barriers to development have yet to be removed on our road to general well-being. These result from our attitudes, behaviour, and way of thinking which must change as regards our environment, work and education and our interaction with other people.

In accordance with the National Development Plan, Latvia has set five main objectives for the next programming period which fully match the common Cohesion Policy objectives:

A smarter Europe: innovative and smart economic transformation – enhancing research capacities and developing skills, supporting businesses and digitalisation;

A greener Europe: climate-neutrality, adaptation to climate change and environmental protection;

A more connected Europe: developing secure, sustainable and accessible transport and enhancing digital connectivity;

A more social Europe: equal opportunities and access to education, healthcare and the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion;

A Europe closer to citizens: sustainable and integrated regional development.

How can you ensure that Latvia's regions and towns can cooperate closely across their different development strategies and priorities?

It should also be stressed that achieving all the above-mentioned objectives and finding the best solutions will require society's involvement. Our social and cooperation partners have played an active role in drawing up the Plan. Wide public participation in planning investments builds trust and ensures our partners will also be active during project implementation. Our priority is to establish close cooperation among all Latvian regions and towns, implementing an integrated approach based on various territories' strategies.

One of the keys to raising productivity is smart innovation achieved in close cooperation between researchers and industry. Thanks to Cohesion Policy funding, efficient instruments for promoting innovation and productivity have been created in Latvia. Achieving a change of behaviour is also important in science and innovation, so that researchers and industry can work hand in hand to create synergies.

Further economic growth and a better standard of living will depend on our ability to build new knowledge-based competitive advantage in a rapidly changing environment. This can be achieved by raising productivity through investments in human capital, research and innovation, as well as introducing new digital technologies.

A decisive factor for building new competitive advantage is changing companies' business model, moving away from short-term profitability towards long-term productivity, leading to sustainable profitability.

EU funds have already helped to foster a suitable ecosystem and cooperation platforms for scientists and industry, enabling Latvian entrepreneurs to develop unique products with high potential for added value. ■



Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Latvia

EU FUNDED PROJECTS HELPING LATVIA TO MOVE TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

THE UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA'S HOUSE OF SCIENCE

Total investment: EUR 12 231 500
ERDF co-financing: EUR 10 396 840

The University of Latvia has successfully finished building the House of Science in its Academic Centre in Riga's Tornakalna neighbourhood, creating the country's most advanced study and research centre. It will enable the university to concentrate its physical, medical and life sciences study and research activities in one place, promoting synergies between study and research and ensuring resource efficiency.

There are 78 research and student training laboratories housing advanced equipment in the smart building with high energy performance. The modern working environment helps to attract young scientific talent to jobs in local scientific institutions and foreign researchers and experts to research work. It can accommodate up to 2 000 students and provides 450 working places for scientific and academic staff.

The Academic Centre's first study and research building – the House of Nature – opened in 2015. The university is currently developing the Centre with plans to build and equip its third and largest building by 2022. In total, there will be four study and research buildings: the House of Nature (natural and life sciences), the House of Science (physical and medical sciences), the House of Letters (social sciences and humanities), and the House of Technologies.

This project is one of the best examples of Structural Funds being successfully implemented in the fields of education and science in Latvia.

<https://www.akademiskaiscentrs.lu.lv/en/>



LAFIVENTS: AI ENHANCES ENERGY PERFORMANCE IN BUILDINGS

Total investment: EUR 254 400
ERDF co-financing: EUR 174 800

Lafivents, a leading building microclimate company in the Latvian market, is developing a building management automation system called iPassé.

With the framework of a project co-financed by the EU Structural Funds, the company carried out an industrial study to create algorithms for building management and automation systems in the MATLAB/Simulink environment. It also created experimental designs enabling the appropriate technological components to be transferred from a laboratory to an artificially created environment, closer to real-life conditions.

During the project, Lafivents developed a product offering clients a wide range of services: for example, a comparative data analysis of energy consumption in buildings, comparing actual energy consumption with energy consumption calculated during the simulation, assessing the efficiency of engineering systems, and forecasting potential financial return from energy savings.

<http://www.lafivents.lv/en>



AERONES – HIGH-FLYER IN MULTI-ROTOR AERIAL VEHICLES

Total investment: EUR 686 100
ERDF co-financing: EUR 240 130

AERONES is currently developing very large drones able to lift up to 100 kilograms. During a trial run, the vehicle lifted a skydiver to a height of 330 metres from where he accomplished the world's first parachute jump from a drone.

The project is developing a solution for remote control and autonomous flying of high-performance multi-rotor aerial vehicles with a lifting capacity of up to 100 kg and a solution for an automated safety system or electronics.

To ensure that pilot projects implemented under special testing conditions can be turned into a service available to a wider public, AERONES is working on solutions to ensure the flight safety of its multi-rotor aerial vehicles. It is using various sensors for distance, altitude, pressure, acceleration, speed and environmental scanning and measurement and improving the control of the multi-rotor aerial vehicles.

This makes it possible to fly a drone at a fixed altitude with a high level of safety; receive messages about and avoid power lines and trees; ensure safe remote control of drones taking into account frequency limits; and fly a drone in bad weather.

The project is implemented in cooperation with Riga Technical University.

<https://www.aerones.com/other/funding/>



HUGO.LV – EUROPEAN LEADER IN LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGIES

Total investment: EUR 2 000 000
ERDF co-financing: EUR 1 700 000

Hugo.lv, the state administration's machine translation platform, provides freely accessible technology to any Latvian resident. Users can automatically translate documents, read web pages, use e-services and access legislation in their chosen language.

During the project, Hugo.lv has been adapted to the needs of visually impaired people and dyslexics, introducing Latvian speech recognition and speech synthesis. This function enables speech to be converted into written text and written text into voice output.

A transcription tool is another speech technology solution designed to improve the state administration system. It facilitates the task of recording and transcribing meetings and allows individual speakers to be identified and marked in the recording.

For three consecutive years, Hugo.lv's machine translation engine has won the WMT international machine translation competition, surpassing solutions offered by other global players. This new platform has made Latvia Europe's leader in the use of language technologies to digitalise the state administration.

The project was developed by the Culture Information Systems Centre in cooperation with the company, Tilde.

<https://hugo.lv/lv/About>



VIZULO: THROWING LIGHT ON EFFICIENT AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT TREE PROPAGATION

Total investment: EUR 608 500

ERDF co-financing: EUR 427 940

Natural light is one of the most important environmental factors for plants, providing the energy necessary for photosynthesis and acting as a signal to regulate various processes. Light is also essential for the vegetative propagation of plants under *in-vitro* and *ex-vitro* conditions.

Most LED luminaires on the market are red and blue spectrum intended for use as additional light sources in greenhouses. Luminaires that provide a wider spectrum light are usually more specialised for particular growing conditions (indoor farming, *in vitro*) and/or for certain widely grown species or varieties. However, this does not mean they are sufficiently energy efficient or can ensure a spectrum suitable for tree propagation.

In cooperation with the Silava Research Institute, a Latvian forest science centre of national importance, VIZULO, a Latvian producer of LED luminaires is investigating ways to improve the efficiency of tree propagation under *in-vitro* conditions and the rootstock micro-cutting process by developing systems of LED luminaires providing a tailor-made spectrum of light.

<https://www.vizulo.com/en/news>

<http://www.silava.lv/mainen/aboutus.aspx>



WiDE: AN EXPERIMENTAL 3D PRINTER ADAPTED FOR PRINTING PROSTHESES

Total investment: EUR 167 900

ERDF co-financing: EUR 114 600

With the support of EU Structural Funds, the Latvian brand, WiDE, has developed a 3D printer with integrated software automating the whole process, which can be used to print prostheses.

WiDE has established a virtual prosthetics clinic and obtained CE labelling for its software. The company produces 3D-printed prostheses and orthoses individually tailored to patients' needs according to a 3D scan of their limbs.

To introduce new technologies in the production of medical devices, prosthetics laboratories usually need to invest in costly instruments, equipment and training. WiDE is implementing a new approach providing the necessary infrastructure, software and specialists. The company has created a web page enabling any doctor, specialist or technician to upload a 3D scan of their patient's limbs. It then creates designs using the software and sends them to the nearest 3D-printing centre.

The project was implemented by Baltic3d.EU in cooperation with Custom3D Tech and the Ventspils University of Applied Sciences.

<http://baltic3d.eu/our-projects-2/>



AN INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP CARDIAC PATIENTS

Total investment in 5 projects: EUR 2 448 400
ERDF co-financing: EUR 800 000

Given global developments in the pharmaceutical industry and worldwide public health indicators, Grindeks is focusing on extending its range of medicines for treating cardiovascular diseases and central nervous system disorders, as well as anti-cancer and diabetes medicines. The company is also developing active pharmaceutical ingredients, aiming to substantially expand its range to at least 40 substances within five years.

Grindeks is one of the founders of the Pharmaceutical, Biomedical and Medical Technology Centre of Expertise, its involvement in this centre helping to secure co-financing from the ERDF to increase research efforts. It has successfully carried out chemical and experimental research on new original candidate medication for treating cardiovascular diseases and has completed phase 1 of clinical research. This new and original medication will prove the capability of Latvian scientists in medicine research to produce the first medication created and developed by a Latvian company since the 1980s.

Using ERDF financing, Grindeks is currently implementing five research projects developing new generic active pharmaceutical ingredients and finished medicinal products. It is also carrying out several bioavailability studies and the preclinical research required to develop new original candidate drugs.

Grindeks is the leading pharmaceutical company in the Baltic States with production facilities in Latvia, Estonia and Slovakia and representative offices in 11 countries. ■

<https://grindeks.lv>

DATA POINT

Investing in air quality for regional development

Clean air is essential to our health and to the environment. However, as a result of rising industrial and energy production, the burning of fossil fuels and biomass, as well as the dramatic rise in traffic on our roads, our towns and cities are suffering from air pollution.

The human toll resulting from poor air quality is worse than for road traffic accidents, making it the number one environmental cause of premature death in Europe, with over 390 000 registered every year. It also impacts on our quality of life by causing or exacerbating asthma and respiratory problems. From an economic point of view, air pollution results in lost working days and high healthcare costs, with vulnerable groups such as children, asthmatics and the elderly being the worst affected. Finally, it damages ecosystems through excess nitrogen pollution (eutrophication) and acid rain. Therefore, investing in reducing air pollution not only fosters human well-being and supports the protection of natural resources but also makes economic sense and contributes to regional development.

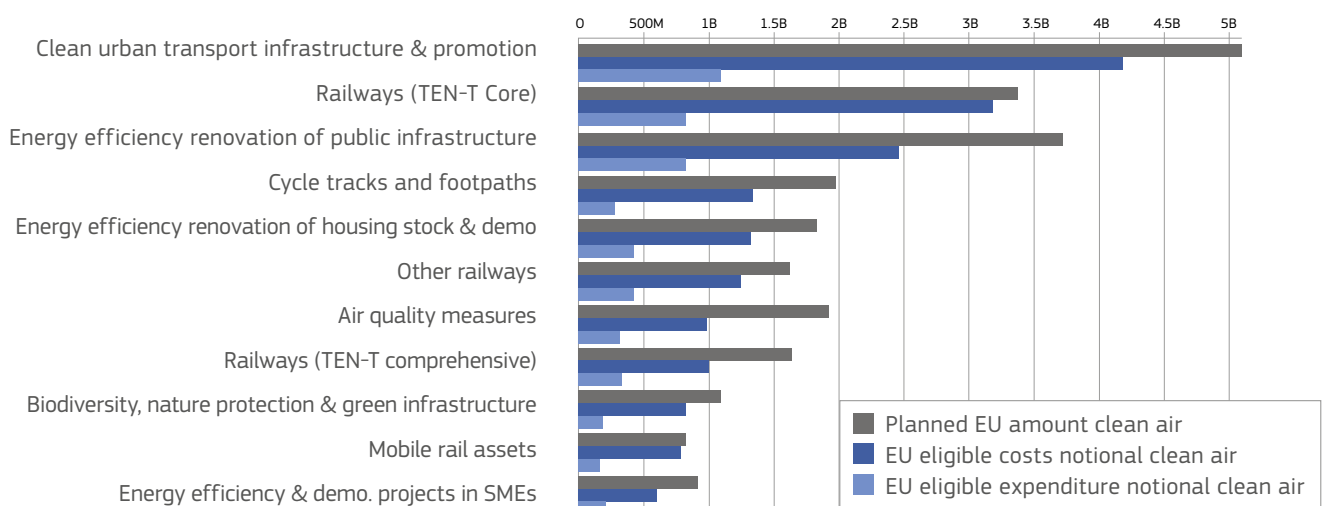
Cohesion Policy contributes to clean air targets

European regions and Member States are being supported by Cohesion Policy, through the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund, in their efforts to reach the European clean air targets set for 2030. In the 2014-2020 period, the policy has allocated more than EUR 30 billion to investments directly aimed at reducing pollution.

Whilst tracking Cohesion Policy expenditure on clean air targets was not explicitly foreseen in the legislation for 2014-2020, it was made possible on the basis of an agreement between Commission services.

Thus, its contribution to such targets is tracked through a system of markers quantifying expenditure contributing to clean air objectives by attributing a certain weight to each investment category (intervention fields). These markers were developed using the model of the EU climate 'Rio markers' (see [Tracking climate expenditure under the ESI Funds, 2014-2020](#)) according to the following rationale:

2014-2020 CLEAN AIR TRACKING IN COHESION POLICY FUNDS – INTERVENTION FIELDS

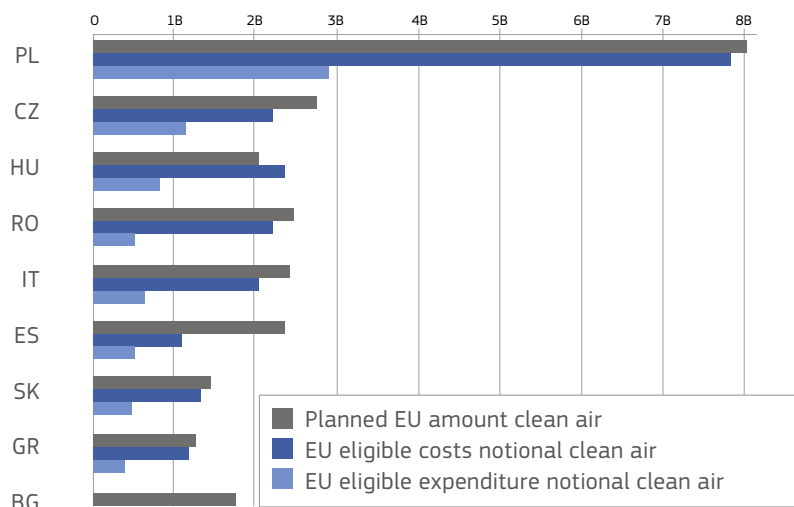


THE COMMISSION'S CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME

This programme aims to reduce the health impacts of air pollution by half in 2030 compared to 2005. The EU's air quality objectives rest on maximum concentration levels for harmful substances, such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides or particulate matter.

Each EU Member State has also committed to national emission reduction targets for the period 2020-29, and more ambitious objectives as of 2030. In addition, source-specific emission targets are included in sectorial legislation (for instance, for fuel).

2014-20 – Clean air tracking Cohesion Policy funds by Member State



Investment categories that are most relevant to reaching the clean air objectives are considered in full, with a weight of 100%. These include air-quality measures and cycling infrastructures.

Categories that partially contribute to achieving pollution reduction targets are assigned a weight of 40%. These include railways, renewable energy, household waste management, green infrastructure and measures promoting energy efficiency, among others.

Following a conservative approach, any other expenditure is not considered as contributing to clean air objectives (weight 0%); in case of doubt, investment categories are attributed to this group.

Investments in clean urban transport contribute most

The chart on the previous page shows the overall financial allocation to the most important intervention fields that contribute to clean air targets, having applied the appropriate weight.

Tracking investment progress by Member State

Investments take time to materialise, from planning through project selection to project implementation. The chart above shows the allocation and progress by Member States in implementing investments that are contributing to clean air targets. The chart can be filtered by year to see progress over time.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/33aUrq8>

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)

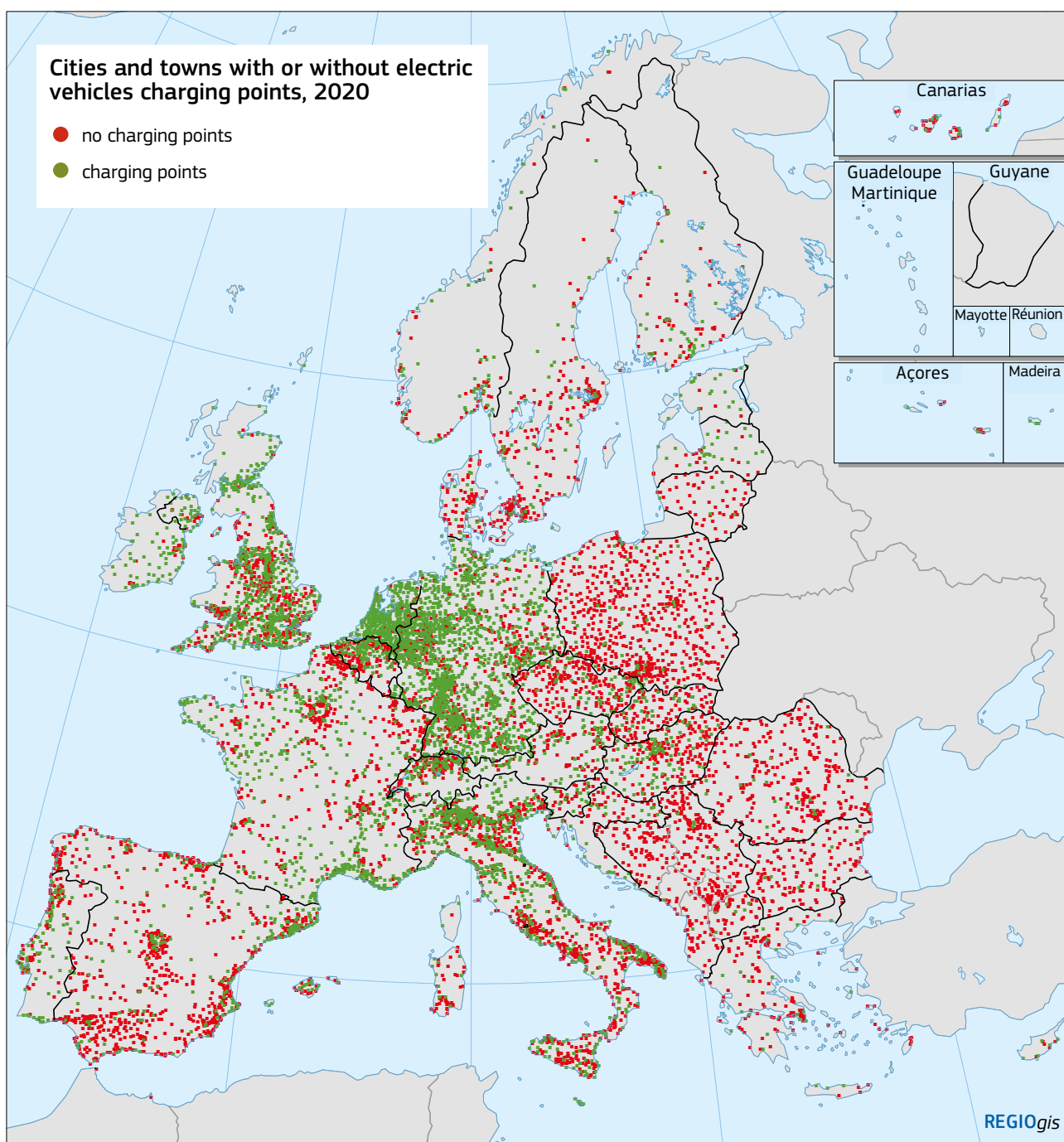
or subscribe to our newsletter: http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/index.cfm?service_id=788

Greener transport options in EU towns and cities

Cities and towns with or without electric vehicles charging points, 2020

The European Commission is proposing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the EU by 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. Emissions from passenger cars, however, are still 20% higher than their 1990 level. As a result, a rapid switch to more

efficient, smaller and electric cars is needed. One obstacle to the fast and widespread adoption of electric vehicles is the lack of public charging stations. In 2020, for example, more than half of our 8 500 cities and towns lacked an electric vehicle charging station. In smaller towns, in particular, companies may fear that their return on investment will not cover their costs.



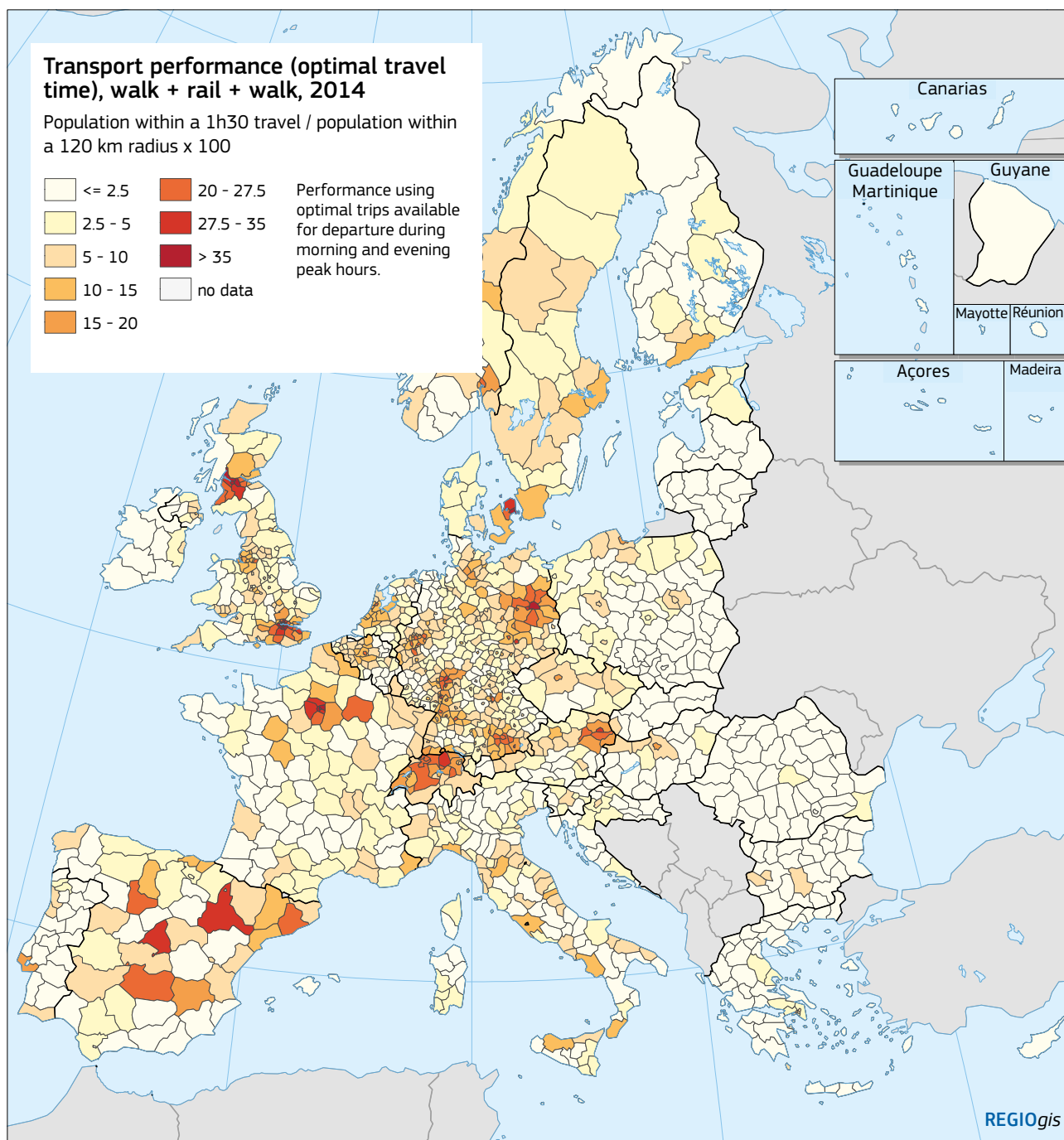
Source: OpenChargeMap, REGIO-GIS



Transport performance (optimal travel time), walk + rail + walk, 2014

Another way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is by taking a train rather than driving a car. In many large western European cities, fast trains run frequently, providing a viable alternative to being stuck in traffic. The map shows the share of the population living within 120

km who can be reached by train and walking in one and a half hours. Cities like Copenhagen, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, London and Vienna achieve high scores on this indicator, while most regions in eastern Europe score very low. More information about this analysis can be found in a new working paper 'Rail transport performance in Europe': <https://europa.eu/!qV76Mm>



Sources: REGIO-GIS, UIC, railway operators, Eurostat



REGIOSTARS

2 0 2 0

The **25 finalists in this year's REGIOSTARS Awards** were selected by a panel of independent jurors tasked with identifying Europe's most outstanding projects. The winner in each of the five main project categories, plus the public's choice, received their prizes on 14 October during the 18th European Week of Regions and Cities 2020 in Brussels, Belgium.

This year, the European Week of Regions and Cities was held over three consecutive weeks, each of which was dedicated to a topical theme:

5-9 October: Empowering citizens

12-16 October: Cohesion and cooperation

19-22 October: Green Europe, in cooperation with the Green Week.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the sessions were digital, with the exception of key events, workshops, some regional tastings and exhibitions.

The Award categories for 2020 are:



INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION FOR A SMART EUROPE



CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR A GREEN EUROPE



SKILLS & EDUCATION FOR A DIGITAL EUROPE



CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT FOR COHESIVE EUROPEAN CITIES



**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS
– 30 YEARS OF INTERREG**





INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION FOR A SMART EUROPE



ESA BIC Portugal – Portugal (ERDF)

The pioneering ESA Portugal Space Solutions Centre promoted space technologies for innovative solutions to non-space markets. The project supported entrepreneurs using space assets to develop new business in smart cities, transport, logistics, health, agriculture, blue economy and the environment. In its first five years, it generated EUR 11.5 million plus over 100 highly skilled jobs in 30 innovative start-ups.

<https://space.ipn.pt/>



Smart Solar Charging Region Utrecht – the Netherlands (European Regional Development Fund – ERDF)

Utrecht's Lombok district is known as the most innovative smart solar charging pilot area. It is being extended via five linked areas in the region, each using solar power generated locally to charge electric cars. The power is stored in car batteries and can be returned to the grid during peak demand. The Vehicle2Grid system has boosted economic activity and contributed to environmental and social sustainability and the low-carbon economy.

<https://smartsolarcharging.eu/>



HyTrEc2 – Hydrogen Transport Economy for the North Sea Region 2 – Denmark (ERDF)

Delivering Europe's ambition for a net-zero-carbon energy system will require a significant amount of hydrogen. This project is fostering green hydrogen, innovative transport solutions and skills in a shared vision for a cleaner economy in the North Sea Region. It is producing renewable hydrogen to refuel a wide variety of vehicles and offering training and skills to promote hydrogen transition across the region.

<https://northsearegion.eu/hytrec2/>



House of Digitalization – Austria (ERDF)

This flagship project in the Lower Austrian Digitalization Strategy established a regional ecosystem of education, science, business and administration. The project connects complementary expertise and infrastructure to promote digital solutions among the region's companies. The results include new qualification formats, innovative products and processes, and solutions for the problems caused by COVID-19.

<https://www.ecoplus.at/interested-in/house-of-digitalization/>



Metal 3D Innovations (Me3DI) – Finland (ERDF)

As part of the 3DP knowledge clusters created in South Karelia, Me3DI is developing and sharing expertise on industrial 3D printing of metals. Engineers, designers, system, material and process providers, SMEs, R&D institutions and end-users can familiarise themselves with the 3DP value creation and supply chain, enabling them to save time and materials when developing their own products.

<https://bit.ly/31cAFJQ>



CIRCULAR ECONOMY FOR A GREEN EUROPE



Take the cool food challenge – France, United Kingdom (ERDF)

Food accounts for about one-fifth of our individual carbon footprints. By using the knowledge of experts in food, nutrition and the environment, the project has revealed how individuals, communities and organisations can work together to reduce carbon emissions. The resulting counter tool and web platform can be used on both sides of the Channel to provide bite-sized actions to keep the earth cool.

<http://coolfood.net/en/>



SeRaMCo – North-West Europe (ERDF)

As the EU's most resource-intensive industrial sector, construction is responsible for around one-third of all waste produced. The SeRaMCo project has been boosting the use of construction and demolition waste to produce cement and concrete in North-West Europe. By replacing primary raw materials with high-quality recycled ones, it is contributing to the EU's transition to the circular economy.

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



Fibrenamics Green – Portugal (ERDF)

This platform, which focused on the development of innovative products from industrial waste, promoted upcycling through design and engineering. The project's activities included generating and sharing knowledge to create new waste-recovery projects based on synergies between universities and enterprises in sectors as diverse as textiles and footwear, mining, automotive and the furniture industry.

<http://green.fibrenamics.com/>



EcoDesign Circle – Baltic Sea (ERDF)

Design is crucial in developing innovative, sustainable and climate-friendly solutions – about 80% of products' environmental impacts occur during the design phase. The project aimed to promote ecodesign and the circular economy in six design centres in the Baltic Sea Region. Deliverables included interactive workshops, educational and information products, an online sustainability guide on circular design, videos and a travelling exhibition.

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



Blue Circular Economy – Northern Europe (ERDF)

This transnational project aims to support and innovate the development of Europe's fishing-net waste industry. Its mission is to generate sustainable business opportunities provided by abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear. The focus will be on the full life cycle of the products, upskilling SMEs to create resource-efficient businesses promoting services and products from marine waste.

<https://bluecirculareconomy.eu/>





SKILLS & EDUCATION FOR A DIGITAL EUROPE



E-SCHOOLS, pilot project – Croatia (ERDF)

Focusing on 10% of all Croatian schools, this pilot project set out to improve schools' digital maturity and the digital competences of teachers and students. The team piloted organisational, technological and educational concepts for introducing ICT into education and administration. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current shift towards remote learning, the results proved particularly relevant.

<http://www.ndsfund.org>



Museums over the borders – Poland (European Neighbourhood Instrument – ENI)

The project's goal was to use shared history to connect cultural heritage on both sides of the Polish-Russian border. Educational attractions, innovative exhibitions and unique events on a European scale drew visitors from home and abroad, giving the region's tourism a boost and helping local communities. Furthermore, digital presentations of the border area's common heritage impacted its cross-cultural integration.

<http://www.muzeum.elblag.pl/>



CYNIC – Sweden (ERDF)

The aim of the project is to provide deeper insights, better knowledge and greater awareness to stimulate sound IT, cyber and information security behaviour among SMEs. By providing enablers for experimental learning, CYNIC is supporting new business models and the transition to digitalisation. Small businesses are given the opportunity to test, experience and evaluate solutions in two information security labs.

<https://www.cynic.se/>



Digital Academies for Inclusive Learning – Italy (ERDF)

Building on strong partnerships between the University of Naples and renowned global IT companies, the programme enrolled 3 000 national and international participants to fill the regional digital skills gap and boost employability and entrepreneurship. To date, the consortia has generated new jobs, start-ups and applied research projects with local SMEs, producing scalable and transferable results.

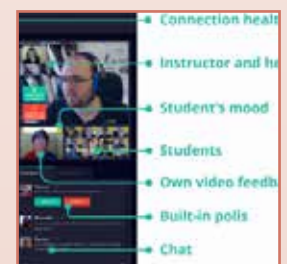
<https://bit.ly/3jVXSXp>



Digital platform for remote training – France (ERDF)

This project focused on developing a new web-developer training course in telepresence by creating and improving innovative tools and content. The O'clock school, France's leading actor in distance learning, improved its virtual classroom environments, created a web platform about the web-developer profession, and developed an interface to help learners find the best job opportunities after training.

<https://oclock.io/>





CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT FOR COHESIVE EUROPEAN CITIES



SHICC – Sustainable Housing for Inclusive and Cohesive Cities – North-West Europe (ERDF)

The lack of affordable housing has created a crisis in many European cities. The SHICC project aims to address this by establishing Community Land Trusts in Brussels, London, Ghent and Lille – and across Europe. These democratic organisations develop and manage affordable homes for people on low and median incomes. The resulting cohesive neighbourhoods develop through community and resident involvement.

<https://bit.ly/3m0sBVO>



A jewel in a poor neighbourhood – Belgium (ERDF)

The Rabot-Blaisantvest neighbourhood in Ghent, one of Flanders' poorest areas, is home to the modern Blaisantkerk church. The project set out to transform the building into a multifunctional facility with the participation of both the neighbourhood and city. The first stage was renovation of the bell tower; this was followed by refurbishing the main building; and finally the construction of the multifunctional building.

<http://www.blaisantkerk.be/>



Buergerbahnhof-Plagwitz – Germany (ERDF)

The Citizen's Station Plagwitz is the result of great cooperation between local citizens, stakeholders, interest groups and Leipzig city administration. Working together, they have reclaimed a derelict area to make a sustainable and creative space for public use. To date, an urban forest is planned, community gardens have been laid out, a playground has been built and a scout track has opened.

<https://buergerbahnhof-plagwitz.de/>



High Five! Jugendrechte im quartier – Germany (ERDF)

High Five! uses creative methods to make young people aged 15 to 25 years more aware of democratic opinion- and decision-making. The project has run weekly workshops, a 14-day summer school and a large youth assembly to introduce the attendees to the opportunities provided by political participation and dialogue with local policy- and decision-makers.

<https://bit.ly/3m3jseD>



VILAWATT: boosting energy transition – Spain (ERDF)

The city of Viladecans considered citizen commitment and a sense of belonging as an essential part of encouraging the transition to sustainable energy. VILAWATT promoted the creation of a new energy company governed by a public-private-citizen partnership. The project focuses on the younger generation by educating for change from childhood, thereby making it easier for citizens to lead transformation of the energy model.

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





YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS – 30 YEARS OF INTERREG

ENERGY@SCHOOL – Interreg (ERDF)

This initiative developed a scheme to train school students to play a crucial role in Europe's transition to a carbon-neutral continent. As 'Junior Energy Guardians', their awareness-raising approach has resulted in significant improvements in energy efficiency in the participating schools. Giving youth greater responsibility in implementing energy smart schools has proved as effective as expensive renovation measures.

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/ENERGYATSCHOOL.html>



Time is now for change – Poland/Lithuania (ERDF)

The project was recognised as the best youth empowerment for cooperation across borders initiative. Polish youth shared knowledge and experience with their Lithuanian counterparts to help implement a programme for street workers. By forming a strong partnership, they addressed some of the many challenges facing at-risk youth on the streets by providing joint training, survival camps and a cross-border social network.

<http://ambc.lt/>



iEER Interreg Europe – Finland (ERDF) ecosystems.

Since 2016, the innovative Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Regions has supported young people and entrepreneurship in 10 European regions. iEER has promoted and developed an entrepreneurial mindset and skills for young people through better regional policy design and implementation. Project partners jointly investigated the regions' business environments, exchanged knowledge and experience, and transferred good practices to develop actions to improve their business ecosystems.

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



Dem Klima auf der Spur – Germany/Czechia (ERDF)

The 'On the trail of the climate' project took up the challenge of tackling climate change across borders. It brought together children and adolescents living in the German-Czech border area to create opportunities for environmental education and action and cultural exchange. Over 2000 young people and teachers participated in climate protection camps, environmental educational events and themed training courses.

<http://klima-projekt.eu/de/index.html>



XBIT – Croatia/Serbia (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance – IPA)

The Cross-border IT network for competitiveness, innovation and entrepreneurship set out to stimulate favourable conditions for innovation, IT, entrepreneurship, job creation, retaining talent and increasing the number of skilled young professionals in the Croatia-Serbia cross-border area. Its achievements included setting up a cross-border network of ICT stakeholders, designing and implementing educational, motivational and networking programmes, and establishing Fab Labs and a Mobile Lab.

<https://www.interreg-croatia-serbia2014-2020.eu/>



REGIOSTARS 2020 – THE FINALISTS

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.

Cross-border mobility linked to training and employment



Brigitte Lavigne
*Vice-president of the CESER and
rapporteur of the study*

At a border where the flow of workers is minimal, mobility related to vocational and continued training could be the key to a cooperation strategy that contributes, upstream, to the consolidation of the Euroregional living area and the strengthening of cross-border social cohesion.

This is the conclusion of a study conducted by the French Regional, Social and Environmental Council of Nouvelle-Aquitaine (CESER), approved in June.

CESER, an advisory council of regional civil society representatives, is tasked with delivering opinions and carrying

out studies on any issue that falls within the region's competence, including international action and European affairs. Since cross-border mobility is a pillar of the Euroregional strategy, CESER decided to look at this issue in light of two relatively recent events that are changing the relationship with the border. The merger of three former regions has given rise to the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, and the creation of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) unites the latter with Euskadi and Navarre.

The study focuses on the realities and practices of stakeholders in the territories, which is why some 40 interviews with stakeholders in cross-border mobility were carried out to assist data collection. It made it possible to identify the obstacles stakeholders face, as well as the opportunities they enjoy.

The analysis of specific projects has shed light on their ability to find concrete solutions adapted to the territories. Finally, the study examines the strategic directions of the region and the Euroregion in light of good cross-border mobility practices at other French borders.

Among the study's findings, it should be noted that cross-border actually takes place on two levels. There is the

local level, which is a fertile space for experimentation and innovation, thanks to a common culture and shared language, and the regional level, since it is now possible for all neo-Aquitaine regions to participate in Euroregional cooperation initiatives.

As for cross-border cooperation, the study shows that, far from the conventional wisdom, it is not limited to individual border crossings but can also take the form of collective or institutional mobility.

Bearing in mind the European status of the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region, CESER advises making mobility related to training and employment a central element of Euroregional cooperation. This recommendation is detailed in 10 strategic recommendations and specific operational measures. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://bit.ly/30pFfE5>



PROJECTS

CELEBRATE DESIGN
IN LAHTI, FINLANDTOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 598 438EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 418 910

A new centre dedicated to art, posters and design is opening in a former brewery in Lahti in southern Finland. The ERDF-funded initiative celebrates and aims to revitalise the city's history of design-led industry.

The core of the 'experience centre' will be the new Lahti Art and Design Museum, set to open in 2021. With a focus on fine arts, design, lifestyle, and digital technology, the museum is also a new home for the city's existing Art Museum and Poster Museum.

In addition, the building will house an art and design shop, a restaurant and a microbrewery along with workplaces and meeting space for creative professionals.

This facility aims to support the revival of local design expertise. Lahti was a respected centre of creative industry until the early 1990s, when recession hit local manufacturing hard, including furniture, textiles and clothing producers.

Although unemployment has since remained high, the centre is expected to draw new businesses, inhabitants and visitors to boost the local economy. Two jobs have already been created in the project. Another 10 to 20 direct posts are expected to follow when the centre opens, which should become a seedbed for further creative and service industries.

The initiative also breathes new life into an historic 19th century building, the former Mallasjuoma brewery. A development company has turned this into the Malski centre, part of which is being leased to the city for the Lahti Art and Design Museum and centre, thereby safeguarding local architectural heritage.

An engaging experience

Designs, operation plans and concepts for the new centre were developed in the Tajumo project, led by the Institute of Design at the Lahti University of Applied Sciences, with the Lahti museums and Lahti City Association of city-centre businesses.

Extensive workshops, in-depth interviews and visits to Finnish and foreign museums helped the team to produce viable business and collaboration models for the site, along with ideas for events, exhibitions, and services that could attract international as well as Finnish visitors.

Groups with an interest in the centre's success have contributed to the process. Among these are artists, designers, gallerists and other museum experts, creative companies, local universities, catering businesses and event production services.

For maximum transparency, every development workshop, seminar and event was open to the public. People were invited to comment on alternatives for the centre's interior design and furniture layout and to see how the latest audio-visual technology might be able to expand the visitor experience.

The museum already has plans for innovative exhibitions over the next few years and to expand its scope. The result is an exciting centre that will enrich Lahti's economy and cultural life. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.lahdenmuseot.fi/museot/en/lad/>

PROJECTS

FLOOD-RISK SERVICE PROTECTS CYPRUS AND GREEK ISLANDS

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 1 159 248**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 985 361**

People in the climate-vulnerable eastern Mediterranean can benefit from early warnings of floods, thanks to the Environmental Risk Management Information Service (ERMIS-F), developed in a cross-border project financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Floods are a growing risk as climate change leads to extreme rainfall patterns. The ERMIS-F project has designed an online system for Cyprus, Crete and the North Aegean Islands that helps residents, businesses, scientists and public services to limit the resulting destruction.

Printable maps show people if their homes or land are at risk, alerting them to take protective measures. Meanwhile, users can access geospatial data through a portal to create maps with customised information. By design, the ERMIS-F service uses this data to give local authorities early warning of floods so that they can plan preventative action.

A social network application connects different stakeholders to share ideas and data. Citizens can also use their smartphones or tablets to crowdsource geotagged photos of local floods and their impacts, helping authorities and researchers to better manage floods.

Finally, a knowledge database links to flood-control measures and best practices, data on past local floods, legislation, public authorities, and software for studies or flood projects. In addition, educational materials, along with events, teach people how to use the platform and raise awareness of the links between floods and climate change.

ERMIS-F services are free of charge, with information in Greek and often English so that locals and visitors alike can access the damage-limiting data.

From data to action

The project was set up to help public services and citizens to act by using complex scientific knowledge to manage natural hazards.

The ERMIS-F team worked with focus groups of local stakeholders in pilot areas (Lesvos, Crete and Cyprus), processing information and creating scenarios for the potential effects of land use and climate change and their impact on sensitive flood areas.

Technical expertise came from the Cyprus Institute, which coordinated the project, the University of the Aegean, the Technical University of Crete, Chania Municipality, the North Aegean Water Directorate, and Limassol Sewage Board.

Civil protection bodies, local governments and institutions, professional associations and environmental organisations also contributed to the project.

Local communities and beneficiaries were involved through information points in Cyprus, Crete and the Aegean Islands, where they learned to use and contribute to ERMIS-F services. The offices, which are still in place, are now managed by local public authorities.

The ERMIS-F system uses open-source software and distributed architecture, making it easy to replicate in other regions, adapt for policymaking and private research, and extend to other hazards such as wildfires or droughts. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://ermis-f.eu/>

PROJECTS

WEATHER WATCH UPGRADES PROTECT ITALIAN AND CROATIAN COASTS

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 1 150 000**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 977 500**

Researchers and regional governments have collaborated in a cross-border project to help protect lives and mitigate weather damage along the Adriatic coast. Their goal is to reduce the risks posed to the area by natural disasters.

Severe weather conditions are expected to become increasingly frequent in the future as the result of climate change. The Adriatic DSS exploitation for Monitoring and Risk management of coastal Extreme weather and flooding (AdriaMORE) project aimed to help mitigate the impact of such events, like flooding, on coastline communities and the environment across Italy and Croatia.

The project built on two previous Interreg projects by upgrading existing systems that monitor and manage hydrometeorological risks, such as storms. The team focused on the accuracy and timing of extreme weather alerts in an effort to improve the information available to civil protection agencies and risk management bodies and thereby to save lives.

According to the Abruzzo regional government, located on the east coast of the Italian peninsula, local rescue services and authorities can now be alerted promptly when extreme weather events are expected.

Attention was also given to studying any particular vulnerabilities within the different regions that participated in the project. Best practices were exchanged between the institutional governance in both countries and support provided to maritime navigation, air traffic control and urban water management authorities.

New components were added to refine coverage for certain stretches of both countries' coastlines. The resulting software is capable of acquiring and elaborating meteorological radar data from systems with different features. The upgrades were piloted on the estuaries of the River Pescara (in Italy) and the River Neretva (in Croatia).

Fighting fires

Wind and water are not the only threats from extreme coastal weather: fire also poses significant risks to coastal communities and offshore vessels. AdriaMORE funded the acquisition of a boat to be used primarily for firefighting operations at sea and along the coastline near Dubrovnik, a historic seaport in southern Croatia, where the boat is moored. It can also be tasked with pollution-related interventions, such as deploying floating dams.

The project also installed a wind profiler which uses radar or sound waves to detect wind speed and direction around Dubrovnik. This device makes it possible to forecast dangerous weather.

As our weather becomes more unpredictable, the results of the AdriaMORE project will make it safer to live in Adriatic coastal communities. Its actions will protect the lives of local inhabitants and help to conserve natural habitats. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/adriamore>

PROJECTS

YOUNG VOLUNTEERS FROM RÉUNION SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITIES

**TOTAL INVESTMENT
EUR 12 601 720**

**EU CONTRIBUTION
EUR 2 211 462**

Thanks to an EU-funded volunteer programme, young Reunionese people gained professional experience while on assignment at organisations around the Indian Ocean and Southern Africa.

Réunion, a French overseas region near Mauritius, lies east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. The island's remote location has limited the mobility of its citizens resulting in a high rate of unemployment among people under 30 years old.

Between 2015 and 2017, 139 young men and women from the island were sent on mission to other countries under the Interreg Indian Ocean programme – a region covering Australia, Comoros, India, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania.

These VSIs (Volunteers for International Solidarity) were co-financed by the ERDF and the Réunion Regional Council. The programme was coordinated by the French platform for International Exchange and Solidarity Volunteering: France Volontaires.

Selected according to their profile, the volunteers were made available to private and public bodies, such as ministries, chambers of commerce and industry, tourist offices, cultural centres or associations. The sectors were varied and included culture, tourism, finance, environment, research and energy.

On average, VSIs are between 24 and 34 years old and are graduates from a variety of backgrounds. Their assignments are designed to strengthen cooperation links between Réunion and other territories.

Each mission lasted from one to three years, for which the volunteers were reimbursed.

Life in the real world

As well as offering motivated young people a chance to experience life in another country, the assignments provided real-world experience in a professional environment. In addition to transferring their skills, the Reunionese volunteers also shared their knowledge with their host organisations.

Many volunteers have gone on to find employment after their placement. By the end of 2018, 43 volunteers had taken up professional roles. They included 14 in Madagascar, 11 in Mauritius, 6 in Comoros, 6 in the Seychelles, 2 in Mozambique, 2 in Tanzania, 1 in Australia and 1 in India.

According to a study carried out by the France Volontaires association, 85 % of former volunteers were employed in a professional activity in Réunion, France and the Indian Ocean region. ■

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.france-volontaires.org/nos-actions/programmes-ultramarins/la-reunion/>

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20 OCTOBER

Online

11th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region <https://www.annualforum2020.eu/en/>

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020

PDF: ISSN 1725-8308 KN-LR-20-003-EN-N

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The content of this issue was finalised in October 2020.

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