

Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, 18 July 2022

Minutes

Meeting of the Dialogue with CPR Partners 2021-2027

21 June 2022

1. Approval of the agenda and of the minutes of previous meeting

The Chair (Head of the Unit “Political and Inter-Institutional Coordination, Strategic Management and Document Management” in DG REGIO) announced the agenda.

2. Nature of the meeting

The meeting was non-public, i.e. it was not recorded nor web-streamed and took place at DG REGIO premises. It was an ordinary session dedicated to informing CPR partners about the latest news on the Commission’s response to face the consequences of Russia’s attack on Ukraine (support under CARE, REPowerEU); the state of play of 2021-2027 negotiations of the Partnership Agreements and the latest actions taken by DG REGIO to ensure the involvement of partners (the European Community of Practice on Partnership). Other issues of this session concerned the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas, the European Year of Youth and the new knowledge database for Cohesion Policy funded projects and beneficiaries called Kohesio.

3. List of points discussed

1. Exchange with Director General Marc Lemaître

Director-General for DG REGIO, Marc Lemaître presented the main features of the Commission’s new initiative **RePowerEU**. Its goal is to reduce dependency on Russian fossil fuels and to look for both short-term alternatives and long-term solutions. He explained the new flexibilities on investment on fossil fuels infrastructures through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), a measure accompanied by a higher ambition for the 2030 targets on renewables.

Marc Lemaître explained that the RePowerEU Plan allows Member States (MS) the possibility to transfer funds from cohesion policy to the RRF. The European Parliament (EP) is analysing the proposal and has expressed its criticism on the transfers between instruments. The Commission (COM) also proposed that MS are obliged to define the so-called ‘Go-To areas’, which are territorial areas that represent no particular environmental risk to accelerate the rollout of renewables through Europe.

As regards the **Ukrainian situation**, the Director-General shortly described the situation that some MS are facing to host displaced persons coming from Ukraine who are benefiting from temporary protection. The measures taken by the COM include the two Cohesion’s Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) packages that give higher flexibility under cohesion policy 2014-2020 to provide MS with upfront liquidity. Estimations indicate that EUR 1 billion will be

mobilised through CARE. He informed the members of the group that the COM was working on new proposals comprising liquidity support in the form of additional pre-financing and extended flexibility between cohesion policy funds 2014-2020 (meanwhile adopted on 29 June 2022).

Finally, Marc Lemaître described the **State of play of the 2021-2027 programming period**. He explained that the pandemic, the multiplication of European instruments (JTF, REACT-EU, CRII, etc.) as well as the Ukrainian situation have caused bottlenecks and difficulties for investments. This has delayed the negotiations of Partnerships Agreements and Programmes. The COM will however deliver by the strict deadline of the end of the year and will not sacrifice the quality of the programming. Even if EUR 23 billion from the 2014-2020 period have been redirected towards emergency actions (health, equipment, lifeline to SMEs and workers), cohesion policy should maintain its long-term strategic thinking and not serve as a fire-fighting resource.

A letter sent by some MS demanded the COM a long catalogue of adjustments to 2014-2020 period to help MS finish the period successfully. The Director General informed the members of the group that COM was working to introduce further flexibility elements that should facilitate the smooth finalisation of the previous period for all MS, allowing them to free out means to support refugees. A key element of the upcoming proposal is the possibility of extending projects that started during the 2014-2020 period to the new period without any further condition.

In the Q&A session, the following points were raised

- ENIL shared their concerns about the protection of human rights following a number of complaints received in relation to certain forms of segregation of refugees, especially persons with disabilities, in cohesion policy projects. ENIL asked if the COM was planning some changes in the current programming period to make sure that MS do not use cohesion funds to segregate persons with disabilities. ENIL also pointed out that Ukraine had asked MS to host orphan children in public institutions and ensure that they turn to Ukrainian institutions after the war. However, ENIL defends other solutions and therefore requested further information on the respect of the rights of Ukrainian children and adults hosted in European institutions.

Marc Lemaître reassured that cohesion policy sets the highest standards and whenever there is such a case, the COM goes to the bottom of it. One isolated case should not be the basis for assessing the overall performance of cohesion policy in the field of human rights. The Director-General reminded that DG REGIO's relation with Ukraine is strictly limited to Cross-Border Cooperation programmes so far, and therefore DG REGIO was not aware of the agreements between individual MS and Ukraine on displaced hosted children.

- ECOLISE requested further information on the investments on fossil fuels projects in the context of RePowerEU and asked about the implementation of the EU Green Deal locally.

Marc Lemaître stated that the geopolitical situation that Europe faces demands more independence from Russian gas and oil. The Director-General mentioned examples of other gas and oil pipelines that will be now reinforced. The COM and MS are looking at feasible and realistic alternatives and this does not necessarily enters in contradiction with the Green Deal goals as far as such goals will be increased (i.e. the carbon emission reduction goal by 2030). He acknowledged that gas and oil infrastructure may potentially have a low return, but that is the price of the geopolitical situation. He highlighted that the local dimension of the European Green Deal is a strategic field for DG REGIO and that DG REGIO will offer

assistance for local energy agencies in the context of Local Energy Communities created by RePowerEU.

- WWF EPO noticed in the RePowerEU SWD that there is a EUR 2 billion investment need in coal – which the ERDF cannot finance – and asked the source of financing. WWF EPO also asked about the upcoming new proposed targets for 2030.

The Director-General insisted on the extraordinary need of investment in infrastructure to reduce dependency on Russia and pointed out that some MS have turned to coal to reduce the use of gas, which in turn help achieve the COM's goal to fill gas reserves up to 80 % by October (currently at around 55%). On the second question, ML stated that new targets will depend on co-legislators but the COM will now propose a 45% share of renewables (instead of 40%) by 2030. Cohesion policy will keep the overall 1% threshold for gas infrastructure as long as it is future-proofed (i.e. investments must also be suitable for other forms of energy such as hydrogen). The EU should raise its ambition on building renovation and energy efficiency.

- Agora Energiewende asked if energy-related projects within CPR funds would be maintained given the transfer possibilities to RePowerEU chapters. Additionally, they made a comment on the massive amounts of investment needed for energy projects. There was no time to answer this question.

- CRPM asked whether the COM would take measures to make sure that transfers are the last resource and whether there would exist the possibility of transferring funds from other instruments like the the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) to cohesion policy.

Marc Lemaître shared his thoughts that the notion of transfers will not disappear in the near future, even if MS have shown so far very modest interest on the transfer possibility for RePowerEU. On the possibility that other instruments transfer funds to cohesion policy, there seems to be no willingness. However, there exists the option to return transferred funds back to cohesion policy.

- In relation to the possibility of extending 2014-2020 projects to the current period, CRPM wanted to know if any project would be eligible and whether there would be a threshold.

The Director-General confirmed that there would not be a threshold, but that only small projects will be phased to avoid excessive administrative burdens.

- CCRN asked whether the COM would push MS to adopt renewable objectives. CCRN also referred to the fact that some MS have banned certain renewable energies (i.e. Hungary's practical ban on windmills) and expressed their concern that the COM has not found the legal basis to challenge this ban even if it is against the Union's priorities. Therefore, they asked how the COM could have an influence and force MS to implement renewables and remove remaining barriers.

Marc Lemaître recalled that energy is a national competence to the greatest extent, but mentioned some legal proposals (i.e. the new Go-To areas) that if adopted will create certain obligations for all MS. Besides, the use of the around EUR 20 billion – new funding coming from the Emission Trading System – will be negotiated and therefore the Commission will push for MS to comply with EU objectives. RePowerEU will also oblige future constructions to be equipped with roof solar panels. ML also recalled that, when needed, the COM ensures the fulfilment of MS' obligations through the infringement procedure.

- CCRN wanted to know how RePowerEU relates to the EU taxonomy rules.

Marc Lemaître expressed his views on the taxonomy debate, arguing that investors would not choose nuclear projects as these tend to be more expensive than initially planned – thus, this does not seem like a debate in the medium and long-term.

- In relation to refugees coming from Ukraine, CCRN pointed out that although cities, municipalities and NGOs are the main actors, funds go to MS.

Marc Lemaître confirmed that immediate efforts come from local and regional authorities as well as NGOs and as a condition a minimum percentage of allocations will need to benefit local entities and NGOs.

- BWN expressed their concern that the acceleration of the energy transition will not be fast enough and demanded that the focus should be on increasing energy efficiency, especially taking into account that in some countries 40% of the population suffer from energy poverty.

Marc Lemaître agreed on the need to look at structural approaches to alleviate energy poverty, like investing in energy efficiency. As part of the Fit for 55 package, the creation of a social climate fund to help the most vulnerable has been proposed by the COM and is currently being discussed by the co-legislators.

- CCRE provided its feedback on CARE, expressing that most funds were already committed, leaving too little space for maneuver, especially in those countries that needed it the most. CCRE also expressed their concern that the need for exceptional measures indicates that programs should be completely re-defined, defending that cohesion policy should not be a crisis-response instrument.

The Director-General defended that CARE is a useful instrument allowing for further flexibilities and he agreed that cohesion policy is not a crisis-response tool, stating that it has not been used as such, since 95 % of the 2014-2020 spending is being spent as intended. He added, however, that cohesion policy should not be discarded as an instrument that can help in crisis situations, while acknowledging that a crisis reserve would be useful.

- In relation to the RRF, CCRE expressed their disappointment that local and regional authorities were not properly involved and called on the COM to better enforce the implementation of the partnership principle in relation to the RRF. CCRE also pointed out that the coexistence of many funds is too burdensome and called for an integrated approach. They also asked whether there would be a time limit for those 2014-2020 projects that will continue under the current period.

The Director General insisted that the COM is learning new lessons after the implementation of the RRF. On the time limit, he explained there would be none, provided that projects are completed under the 2021-2027 period, and not beyond.

2. Support for refugees fleeing Ukraine

Ruth Paserman, Director (DG EMPL), presented the measures taken by the COM affecting the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) in the context of CARE.

About the ESF, Ruth Paserman highlighted that the scope remains the same, ie. support to employment, inclusion and education, and wide enough to accommodate a wide range of needs. She highlighted examples of possible ESF-funded measures to address the specific needs of people fleeing Ukraine and arriving in the EU, eg. psychological support, support to access employment, accommodation and other services, language classes, school integration for children, etc. The CARE packages [later complemented by FAST CARE] introduce provisions aiming at increasing flexibility when disbursing available 2014-2020 funds. As

part of this, a new unit cost of EUR 40 per refugee per week¹ for a maximum of 13 weeks was introduced to help fund basic, immediate assistance. Eligibility starts from 24 February 2022.

As regards the FEAD, there is further flexibility for MS to amend programmes to address urgent needs for food and basic material assistance. Retroactive eligibility also applies to FEAD.

DG REGIO presented the new common flexibilities introduced by CARE for REGIO-managed funds (i.e. 100 % co-financing for accounting year 2021-2022; retroactive eligibility as of 24 February 2022; cross-financing and interchangeability, unit cost, etc.). It has been estimated that CARE will unblock EUR 1 billion in 10 MS from cohesion policy funds.

DG REGIO also presented the possibilities under the ERDF (i.e. investments in accessible infrastructure and related equipment through improved access to mainstream services such as the labour market, social housing, public transport, education or social and health care). New support measures for MS include a one-stop-shop for questions on CARE and the adjustment of the IT system for communication with MS (SFC).

HOME presented the measures taken to support refugees fleeing Ukraine including a disbursement of up to EUR 400 million as Emergency Assistance (AMIF and BMVI) under programming period 2021-2027 and the flexibility to use unspent funds to deal with migration needs. However, HOME acknowledged that this flexibility is just a possibility, but MS cannot be forced to redirect funds.

Other measures have been taken such as the adoption and activation of the temporary Protection Decision for persons displaced from Ukraine.

3. State of play of 2021-2027 programming

DG REGIO described the state of play of 2021-2027 programming for cohesion policy: 9² Partnership Agreements have been adopted, 14 have been submitted by MS and are on track, and 5 are expected to arrive in June or July. As for programmes, 39 have been adopted, 266 have been submitted and the rest are expected before October. As for MARE, 1 programme was adopted, 13 have been submitted and are on track for adoption and 12 are expected before October. As regards HOME, 4 programmes have been adopted, 75 have been submitted and are on track for adoption and 3 are expected soon.

DG REGIO evaluated the situation as follows: There are various reasons why programmes are late including the bottlenecks caused by the coexistence of cohesion policy funds with new funding instruments. However, all Partnerships Agreements and programmes are expected to be adopted by the end of the year, with the priority to start implementation now. Other issues encountered during programming were mentioned, such as administrative capacity, e-cohesion, the enabling conditions fulfilment, the JTF (late additions and fund with short spending deadline), the Do No Significant Harm principle and the New European Bauhaus (both new for MS).

The PowerPoint presentation to this point can be found [here](#).

- EUROCHILD referred to the situation of orphan children, whose evacuation has been carried out in contradiction with enabling conditions and fundamental rights. EUROCHILD suggested that the education system is also tackled by funds for the development of inclusive, multicultural, multilingual schools, where also psychological support is provided. ENIL also

¹ On 29 June 2022, the COM adopted a new proposal increasing this unit cost to EUR 100 per refugee per week for a maximum of 26 weeks.

² 10 Partnership Agreement by the end of June.

referred to the situation of persons with disabilities coming from Ukraine and defended their right to receive appropriate community-based care instead of at institutions.

EMPL confirmed that the COM remains attached to respecting enabling conditions on the rights of children and persons with disabilities and ensured that MS do intend to reduce residential care and, in the case of children, promote foster and home care. The COM will monitor this throughout the programming period. EMPL recalled that the child guarantee continues to apply. In spite of this, the most urgent need is to ensure that displaced persons have their essential needs covered.

- Both ENIL and ECRE asked how NGOs can access funds and called the COM to define a minimum rate of allocations for NGOs, who are on the frontline of the response to the crisis.

EMPL clarified that, in shared management funds, it is complicated to ensure that the money arrives to particular beneficiaries, while in direct management many of the beneficiaries –that are directly selected by the COM- are indeed NGOs. However, the Commission negotiations with Member States take this into consideration and the upcoming proposal will introduce a minimum rate³.

- ENIL also described the situation of Roma people from Ukraine that are being denied support and asked how the COM can ensure that they also benefit from the EUR 40 unit cost (referred to as “vouchers” in the question raised). CPMR also asked if the COM is considering an increase in the ceiling of EUR 40 per refugee per week and called for further attention to capacity building.

EMPL clarified that the EUR 40 unit cost is not a voucher that will go directly to refugees but rather a way for the COM to calculate how much money to allocate to affected MS, based on the number of refugees they are receiving⁴.

- Finally, ENIL asked whether it is possible to find a list of enabling conditions that are or are not being fulfilled per Member State.

EMPL recalled that no such assessment will be available until the final adoption of the programmes. It is also worth noting that the assessment of enabling conditions is done for each programme. Therefore, depending on the programme architecture in each MS, situations and assessment might differ even within the same MS.

- ECRE pointed out that participation of social stakeholders was not enough and urged the COM to make the publication of the composition of monitoring committees in MS compulsory, so that it is possible to check if civil society is part of such committees. As per the CPR (article 39), MS have the obligation to publish the list of monitoring committee members, on the website of the relevant programme.

- EUCLID NETWORK asked how the COM ensures that funds are allocated to sustainable goods, services and organisations.

EMPL stressed that the COM has raised pressure on MS to allocate funds to sustainable investments.

³ On 29 June 2022, the COM adopted a new proposal including a minimum financial allocation of 30% of the budget of priority axes set up to address migratory challenges for beneficiaries that are local authorities or civil society organisations.

⁴ See note 1

4. Involvement of partners: The European Community of Practice on Partnership

DG REGIO introduced the new European Community of Practice on Partnership (ECoPP). The first plenary meeting took place on 26 April 2022 including a high-level panel of EU institutions and a panel of 5 DGs (REGIO, EMPL, AGI, HOME and MARE) on partnerships in shared management funds. The ECoPP is composed of 158 members that are representatives of partners defined in Article 8 of the CPR and managing authorities from almost all MS. Despite the fact that the ECoPP was planned as a forum for local and MS level partners, also several EU level actors were accepted but asked to team up with local partners.

ECoPP sub-groups work between plenary sessions. These thematic sub-groups are small self-managing informal groups with the objective of exchanging relevant practices, sharing information and lessons learnt and presenting outputs at the second ECoPP meeting that will take place in December. They must connect at regular intervals and are assisted by experts.

AGRI presented Sub-group 1, 'Complementarity of funds', with the focus on how to promote synergies among EU funds, programs and projects, European regions and governance levels. DG REGIO shortly described sub-group 2, 'Co-creating meaningful partnerships', with a focus on how to involve relevant partners in the preparation of strategic documents such as partnership agreements and programs. MARE introduced sub-group 3, 'Partner selection', which focuses on how to ensure that the selection process is transparent, balanced and representative. The results of this sub-group will also focus on present and future constraints and challenges. HOME presented sub-group 4, 'Stakeholder capacity building', formed by 30 members discussing on solutions for the challenging lack of capacity. EMPL shortly introduced sub-group 5, 'Different forms of collaboration', focusing on social and civil dialogues, public-private partnerships, networks, consortia, among others; and DG REGIO described sub-group 6, 'Partner facilitation', on how partners can work as facilitators to ensure better stakeholder engagement. In this last group, the question on the needed skills in partnership is also addressed.

More information on each sub-group can be found [here](#).

- ECOLISE, who is part of the ECoPP, wanted to know the COM'S official definition of 'partner'.

EMPL explained that partners are those stakeholders involved in the implementation of the funds⁵.

- EAPB did a remark on the selection of partners in Germany that seems to be random and asked about the application process to become a member of the ECoPP.

DGs REGIO and EMPL explained that despite being advertised, the list of partners is not covering all Member States in a sufficient manner. Therefore, the COM will reopen the application process by the end of the year.

- CCRE asked whether there would also be exchanges among sub-groups and pointed out that sometimes partners are ideally selected but there is a lack of capacity.

EMPL highlighted that the idea behind the ECoPP was to create platforms for stakeholders who want to share their experience and which serve as way to foster networking. In the next plenary session, all sub-groups will present their results to other members.

⁵ On this, see the European Code of Conduct on partnership (2019). Partners are defined as representatives of the relevant stakeholders, and can be public authorities at national, regional and local levels in the Member States, social partners and organisations representing civil society.

5. Long term vision for EU rural areas

DG REGIO presented the state of implementation of the Communication on the Long Term Vision for EU rural areas (LTVRA), which was adopted in June 2021 and pursues the objective of making rural areas stronger, better connected, more resilient and more prosper by 2040. The Vision contains following deliverables:

- The creation of the COM Rural Action Plan, which is up and running. The Plan involves all different COM Departments and policies and includes the update of COM's guidelines for designing legislation at EU level through Territorial Impact Assessments and rural proofing, which will need to be exercised in a number of measures. The Plan also includes the already signed agreement with the Joint Research Centre of the COM to materialise the EU Rural Observatory on 23 June. This will contribute to improve analysis of the situation in rural areas vis à vis other areas. A tool kit on access and combination of EU funds is on its way, together with the EU territorial development handbook to be published in October, which provides solutions to make use of cohesion policy for territorial development. As expressed by Commissioner Ferreira, there will be a focus on the interactions between urban and rural areas under PO5.
- The Rural Pact announced in the Communication is one of the main deliverables and complements the Action Plan through amplification of rural voices enabling networking and collaboration. The Pact will be a framework for cooperation and will be updated on a regular basis. More than 1,000 representatives are part of the Rural Pact Community. Participants submitted over 40 commitments and healthcare, childcare, care for the elderly, employment, growth, digital infrastructure and broadband were mostly mentioned as priorities. DG REGIO extended the invitation to join this Community to all CPR partners. DG REGIO also commented that by 2023 a coordination group will take over the coordination of the Rural Pact, so the COM will be a mere facilitator. The COM will set up a rural revitalisation platform -a collaborative platform to support networking- and a single website for all information about the Rural Pact.

More information on the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas can be found in the [presentation](#).

- EUCLID NETWORK asked how the social economy is envisioned in the LTVRA.

DG REGIO confirmed that this sector was very well represented in the Rural Pact Conference and it is also considered in the Action plan, whose fourth chapter deals with entrepreneurship and social economy. This ongoing initiative foresees the creation of innovative environments in rural areas through education, empowerment or entrepreneurs support.

- COPA COGECA requested that the toolkit on the use and combination of EU funds for rural areas reflects to what extent funds contribute to facing given challenges and which funds could further contribute.

DG REGIO stated that the toolkit on EU funds would address practitioners, i.e. those in charge of designing local development strategies. This toolkit aims at sharing and extending good practices across the EU. The toolkit will comprehend all funds that may intervene in rural areas, notably not only CAP and cohesion policy but also direct management programmes.

- COPA COGECA also asked to what extent the rural proofing and the Rural Observatory are interconnected and whether the Rural Observatory is merely a platform.

DG REGIO replied that they are correlated, as observatories will provide the data to conduct rural proofing, while in turn rural proofing will provide data that will be collected by observatories.

- COPA COGECA asked about the process to join the Rural Pact Coordination Group.

DG REGIO explained that this is being discussed but partners will receive the information once practicalities are fixed.

- REVES AISBL wanted to know how other DGs contribute to the development of these initiatives and how participation of stakeholders is envisioned in the rural proofing.

DG REGIO informed of the strong interconnection with other DGs through the Interservice Steering Group. Other DGs own many initiatives of the Action Plan, which is all about the mainstreaming of rural concerns at the level of rural policies and initiatives.

On the second question, DG REGIO announced that there will be a dialogue with stakeholders as well as a public consultation.

- ECOLISE requested information on the local implementation of the Green Deal at the level of the Observatory and how the COM will make sure other aspects including social economy are in coherence with the Green Deal objectives.

DG REGIO stated that for now the Observatory will concentrate in five specific subjects but always taking into consideration Green Deal goals: demography, economic development, social issues, education and health, and infrastructures services and accessibility. For the moment, climate transition will not be monitored under the Rural Observatory.

- BWN asked at which level the rural proofing and assessment will be conducted and asked whether the COM had looked into how national Territorial Just Transition Plans envision the transition for the rural areas.

DG REGIO explained that rural proofing is conducted at the level of the COM through non-legislative initiatives: different DGs discuss the potential positive or negative impacts of their proposals on rural areas. When it comes to legislative initiatives, rural proofing is conducted through territorial impact assessments. But the COM has invited MS and regional authorities to conduct rural proofing at their level to fully cover the concerns of rural areas.

- BWN asked what the stocktaking exercise means in practice.

DG REGIO announced that the methodology will be discussed in September and it will be launched once all PAs have been adopted.

- BWN asked whether there would be territorial plans specifically developed for rural areas like in the case of the Territorial Just Transition Plans.

DG REGIO replied that in principle this will not be the case at least as far as cohesion policy is concerned. However, in the context of CAP, there might be a more systematic approach for developing the programmes. DG REGIO compromised to address this question to DG AGRI and then provide ECOLIS with an answer.

6. European Year of Youth

The Chair informed partners about four REGIO initiatives in the context of the 2022 European Year of Youth (EYY). The 2022 EYY focuses on education, in which cohesion policy already invested more than EUR 3 billion in 2014-2020 (i.e. education, training, upskilling or reskilling, etc.). The Chair presented the following new non-legislative initiatives in this context:

- The COM is looking at the situation of youth in the Just Transition Fund territories and is providing support to youth-led small green actions.
- An initiative specific for EU's outermost regions focusing on youth skills.

- Under “Interreg for youth”, the COM wants to further involve youth in decision-making processes and governance, so this initiative brings together volunteers and Interreg managing authorities.
- Finally, at the end of 2022, the COM will put forward a communication reflecting on the challenges linked to brain drain and proposing specific initiatives that will help bring youth back to their home territories and provide them with ways to reinforce their contribution to their own governance.

Partners asked about the distribution of these grants to MS. They also requested information on how young people can access such grants. The Chair explained that these grants are not distributed among MS and that each initiative will work in a different way.

7. Kohesio

DG REGIO presented the new knowledge database for Cohesion Policy funded projects and beneficiaries called [Kohesio](#).

Kohesio is an online platform that aims at putting projects on the map, giving them visibility and enhancing transparency of projects and beneficiaries. The platform includes projects from 27 MS financed by the ERDF, the CF and the ESF for the programming periods 2014-2020 and 2021-2027. Soon, it will also cover projects under JTF. The platform is fed by the lists of operations published by MS. Data are standardized and checked by DG REGIO.

DG REGIO performed a live demo to show partners the different possibilities offered by the platform, including the tools to search, filter and sort the more than 1.7 million projects and 500,000 beneficiaries.

Kohesio will keep growing with the new projects of the 2021-2027 period. The aim is to enrich the debate with JTF, Interreg, CAP and REACT-EU projects, as well as to have a multilingual website by the end of the year.

More information on Kohesio can be found in the [presentation](#).

- BWN asked if Kohesio replaces the former excel with the list of beneficiaries and about the relationship between Kohesio and the Open Data Platform.

DG REGIO clarified that Kohesio does not replace the excel file, as this tool is focused on improving communication and that Kohesio is complementary to the Open Data Platform.

- EUCLID NETWORK asked if the platform updates automatically and who provides the technological expertise.

DG REGIO described how the platforms aggregates MS’s lists of operations. In this sense, the platform, will update automatically; however, certain degree of manual work is still needed. The expertise comes from DG CNECT.

- Partners also asked if there exists the possibility to know if the projects contained in the platform are approved for funding or are already implemented and closed.

DG REGIO acknowledged that only the starting and closing dates appear in the platform, but not the status.

- Partners expressed their desire to contribute to this platform.

DG REGIO explained that since the platform feeds from national data, national authorities should be contacted in the case that some projects do not appear in the platform.

- COPA COGECA suggested that also EARDF projects could be included in the future and asked whether the platform allows sorting projects by category of beneficiary.

DG REGIO said that for now projects could be sorted only by private or public entity and explained that in order to have more typologies, the legislation should be revised so as to make it compulsory for national authorities to collect more data. As for EARDF, DG REGIO clarified that Kohesio is envisioned only for cohesion policy funds for now.

- BWN requested a list of MS that do not have a comprehensive list of projects and need to be encouraged to make more data available.

DG REGIO explained that the COM is trying to encourage authorities to include more information. In fact, this would also be useful for their own management and visibility.

- BWN explained that in the platform sometimes beneficiaries are grouped and the information on the final beneficiary does not appear. Therefore, they asked if the COM is planning to improve it and make national authorities disclose data.

DG REGIO explained that beneficiaries are always displayed in the platform; however, this is not the case of contractors. This will change with the 2021-2027 programming period since the contractors data will be required. DG REGIO suggested to have a unique identification number for each beneficiary, which could be useful for transparency purposes.

8. Any other business

The Chair informed members about the upcoming initiatives under DG REGIO lead:

Non legislative initiatives: the above-mentioned Communication on Brain Drain (December 2022); the 4th report on the implementation of EU's macro-regional strategies (November 2022); the 2022 Annual Summary Report on the implementation of European Structural and Investment Funds.

Legislative initiatives: a proposal to further increase flexibilities for cohesion policy programmes in the context of the Ukrainian situation (29 June); a proposal addressing the specific situation of cross-border cooperation programmes involving Ukraine; a delegated act establishing standardised off-the-shelf audit sampling methodologies and modalities to cover one or more programming periods. Several evaluations are also under way: e-cohesion 2014-2020; investments in RTD infrastructures 2007-2013; ex-post evaluation of 2014-2020 programmes.

4. Conclusions/recommendations/opinions

To conclude the meeting, the Chair requested feedback from the group members regarding the meeting's structure and content. For the next meeting, the members suggested to have more interactive exchanges and to discuss the agenda before the meeting. They also requested to have more information on the implementation of horizontal principles and the partnership principle; further discussions about the local level (challenges and bottlenecks encountered by local authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders that benefit from cohesion policy), and a way to keep the group alive in-between meetings.

5. Next meeting

The Chair announced that the next meeting of the group would take place in December 2022. Feedback from members will be taken into account. COM will aim to circulate the draft agenda for comments.

6. List of participants

List of participants:

1. AGORA ENERGIEWENDE
2. BWN – CEE BANKWATCH NETWORK
3. CCRE – CONSEIL DES COMUNES ET RÉGIONS D’EUROPE
4. CCRN – CAPITAL CITIES AND REGIONS NETWORK
5. COGECA – EUROPEAN AGRI-COOPERATIVES
6. COPA – EUROPEAN FARMERS
7. CRPM – CPMR – CONFERENCE OF PERIPHERAL MARITIME REGIONS
8. EAPB – EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC BANKS AND FUNDING AGENCIES AISBL
9. ECOLISE – EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR COMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY
10. ECRE – EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON REFUGEES AND EXILES
11. ENIL – EUROPEAN NETWORK ON INDEPENDENT LIVING BRUSSELS (ENIL)
12. ENSIE – EUROPEAN NETWORK OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION ENTERPRISES
13. EURADA – EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES
14. EUROCHILD AISBL
15. EUROCITIES
16. EUCLID NETWORK
17. EUROHEALTHNET
18. REVES AISBL – EUROPEAN NETWORK OF CITIES AND REGIONS FOR THE SOCIAL ECONOMY AISBL
19. WWF EPO – WWF EUROPEAN POLICY PROGRAMME
