

Minutes of the expert groups

Brussels, XXX

Minutes

Meeting of the Dialogue with CPR Partners 2021-2027

1 December 2022

1. 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 Common provisions regulation (CPR) partners about the latest news on the Commission's response to face the consequences of Russia's attack on Ukraine; the state of play of 2021-2027 adoption of programmes; the recent developments on the Cohesion Open Data Platform; capacity building and the newest Commission's initiatives: New European Bauhaus, EU Teens4Green and Innovative implementation of the partnership principles.

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

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

3. List of points discussed

1. Exchange of views with DDG EMPL: Update on policy and funding developments in relation to the war in Ukraine and integration of people fleeing Ukraine, horizontal enabling conditions.

EMPL DDG Andriana Sukova presented the latest measures taken by EMPL and REGIO to mitigate the effect of crises (Covid-19, Ukraine) in a context of labour market and skills evolutions. Local stakeholders (local authorities, civil society organisations) and their major role in supporting Ukrainian refugees are at the centre of attention of the Commission. This is also shown by the FAST-CARE provision requiring Member States to allocate at least 30% of the resources used to support operations addressing the migratory challenges as a result of the military aggression by the Russian Federation, to local authorities and civil society organisations operating in local communities¹.

Questions centred around the whether Member State's amendments to the CPR would be published and how to monitor the 30% requirement (EESC), the involvement of civil society organisations (EESC), the availability of resources liberated with CARE and FAST CARE for the implementation level on the ground (ECRE, ELARD), the call for civil society organisations to have access to direct funding (ECRE, ELARD).

¹ Source: Regulation (EU) 2022/2039, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2039&from=EN>

SGI Europe asked about ESF+ transnational cooperation in the exchange of good practices related to Ukraine. EMPL said the first call to be launched, in 2023, would be on ALMA², with a further call on the consequences of the war in Ukraine following later on. ECRE asked about the work done in the Solidarity Platform and possible future publications.

On the situation in Member States, Eurochild pointed to the staff shortages and difficulty to support under aged refugees in PL, asking whether a stronger cooperation between Norwegian and EU-funded support would be possible. EMPL pointed to the programmes under adoption that should come soon and the possibilities for PL to make use of REACT-EU. ELARD said that also in RO there is a huge delay in implementation.

Stakeholders (EESC, ECRE, ELARD, EAPB) agreed that the Commission needs to closely monitor the implementation of, among others, the CARE-induced unit cost for refugees and gather data. EMPL replied that the evaluation only takes place ex post, and that the Commission must rely on the reports by Member States.

[Link to the PowerPoint presentation](#)

2. State of adoption of programmes

DG REGIO presented main negotiation issues, Common Provisions Regulation novelties, main investment areas in European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund (CF), DG EMPL presented the European Social Fund+ (ESF+) thematic concentration requirements, and progress of Member States so far in programming support for addressing child poverty, social inclusion,, DG HOME presented HOME funds, DG AGRI presented Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plans. The state of play of programming covered all CPR (including EMFAF³) funds and the CAP.

On administrative procedures and simplifications, stakeholders urged for a follow up on simplifications. The EESC asked for more elaboration on flat-rate reimbursement and simplified cost options (SCO), as Member States complained about an increased administrative workload. ELARD enquired whether the rulebook would also apply for I3 and suggested more ready-to-use guidelines as implementation on the ground was still difficult.

On the HOME affairs funds, the Red Cross/ Red Crescent asked to support Ukrainian refugees' integration. On InvestEU, the Euclid Network called on social skills to be funded.

The need for cohesion policy to support long-term investment (instead of addressing crises) was widely supported (Red Cross/Red Crescent, EURADA, Climate actions network), Red Cross regretted that as a result, the adoption of 21-27 cohesion policy programmes is severely delayed, thus delaying reforms. Representatives of the Commission highlighted the record speed with which amendments (in relation to Ukraine) were approved and that there is a need to combine flexibility with long-term vision for the post 2027 period. Concern was expressed regarding RePowerEU (Climate action network), where money was taken from regional levels to national plans.

² [How to make ALMA work | European Social Fund Plus \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund

PO5 was particularly relevant for stakeholders, questions centred around the low overall amount assigned to this priority (Council of Municipalities), the potential replacement of local initiatives' funding by PO5 with a total reduction of locally committed funding (Barcelona Metropolitan Area), sometimes local investment needs being diverted to NextGenerationEU with different and unknown procedures.

[Link to the PowerPoint presentation](#)

3. Cohesion Open data Platform (2021-2027)

REGIO introduced the Cohesion Open Data Platform and the changes introduced for the 2021-2027 period. Especially interesting is the fact that the Platform has been extended to cover also the funds managed by DG HOME. While InfoRegio is a platform for news and announcements and the newly launched Kohesio is a project database based on national information, the Cohesion Open Data Platform is a window into the programming data, which can be explored from different perspectives applying multiple filters (for programme, fund, country, policy objective, etc).

REGIO presented the key changes introduced in the Platform for the new programming period 2021-2027 and presented the features and functionalities of the tool in a live demo. Especial emphasis was made in the common output indicators. These were discussed with Member States experts in the preparation of the legislation and give stakeholders indications of what is expected to be achieved and where.

An interesting feature is the possibility to embed the data, i.e. use the chart code to show the data in your own website, which will be automatically updated together with the original.

[Link to the PowerPoint presentation](#)

[Link to the Cohesion Open Data Platform](#)

- EURADA asked whether there will be regional data available. REGIO answered that the platform will include soon a curated view of all the regional programmes' investment plans. However, for national programmes it is more difficult to know their regional allocations and impact.
- CEE Bankwatch Network asked how measures are allocated to the thematic objectives. REGIO explained that the specific objectives are the main level of programming with finances, output and result indicators reported by specific objective. Where some operations contribute to multiple indicators choices are often made to choose the most representative indicators to try and not overburden the beneficiaries. This choice of indicators was discussed with Member States in programming.
- ELARD wanted to know how the platform works together with the Rural Observatory to break down even more the data. REGIO clarified that since the platform will produce information on the use of funds and will present programme monitoring indicators, there will be a complementarity with the Rural Observatory.
- Climate Action Network asked when disaggregated data by project will be available. REGIO explained that the most detailed level of data in the Platform are actions in intervention fields, but they are not projects. What we have here right now is ex-ante information reflecting

the planned investments according to the adopted programmes. Data stories are planned for publication in Q1-Q2 2023 once we have the full picture.

- Council of European Municipalities and Regions pointed out that a filter of the type of beneficiaries (national, regional, local authorities, other types...) would also be useful. REGIO answered that the programmes only include descriptive information, and the beneficiary types are not yet defined. During and after implementation, the Commission does not receive from Member States structured data about operations and beneficiaries. However, the 2014-2020 ex-post evaluation now underway will use national data on operations and beneficiaries to better understand the investments and their impacts.
- Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) asked what the differences and complementarities are with Kohesio. REGIO clarified that while Kohesio has data scraped from Member States operations databases and shows projects funded by cohesion policy, the Cohesion Open Data Platform shows the programme level planned investments and the progress towards targets in implementation.

Finally, REGIO announced the publication of a video presentation of the functionalities of the Platform after the European Week of Regions and Cities here: <https://eu.app.swapcard.com/event/euregionsweek-2022/planning/UGxhbm5pbmdfOTYwNDEw>
For more updates on Cohesion Open Data follow <https://twitter.com/RegioEvaluation>

4. Social Innovation match

EMPL presented the Social Innovation Match (SIM), a new database allowing to search case studies and partners in the investment areas of the ESF+, i.e. initiatives related to employment, education and training and social inclusion. The aim of the platform is to promote the transfer and/scaling-up of social innovation across Europe. This means that also projects with no ESF+ funding can be found in the database. EMPL clarified how the submitted initiatives are validated at various levels (national level, then EU Competence cent for Social innovation) before being added to SIM (see presentation) and showed the functionalities of the database in a live demo. Additionally, any organisation can register and be part of the platform. This will help organisations find partners in Europe. This is the link to the database: <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/social-innovation-match>

Link to SIM: <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/social-innovation-match>

[Link to Powerpoint Presentation – Social Innovation Match](#)

- CEE Bankwatch asked what the criteria are for including initiatives in the platform. EMPL explained that the criteria are based in the definition of “social innovation” in article 2 of the [ESF+ Regulation](#)⁴.
- EAPB wanted to know if any project funded by the ESF+ will be automatically uploaded to SIM. EMPL clarified that there is no automatic uploading of projects, which will first be approved by the Member State and then validated by the European Competence Centre for Social Innovation.

⁴ [‘social innovation’ means an activity, that is social both as to its ends and its means and in particular an activity which relates to the development and implementation of new ideas concerning products, services, practices and models, that simultaneously meets social needs and creates new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, thereby benefiting society and boosting its capacity to act](#)

5. Capacity building for partners

EMPL recalled the ESF+ requirements for all Member States to allocate “an appropriate amount” to capacity building of social partners and civil society. This amount is discussed bilaterally for each Member State between the Member States and the Commission. For those Member States which received a country-specific recommendation in the field (Hungary, Poland, Romania), this amount must be at least 0.25 % of the national ESF+ allocation under shared management. Further information on the planned amounts per Member State so far, can be found in the PowerPoint presentation.

Most partners (ENIL, Eurochild) did not have any experience to share from their members on the ground regarding capacity building under ESF+, but this might come later as the programmes are only starting their implementation. ENIL recommended to help NGOs understand EU funding and be able to contribute, because they are the ones who know best about the grassroots needs. Euclid praised the meaningful support received through an ESF+ grant (EaSI strand – support to EU networks - <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/how-direct-management-works>).

[Link to the Powerpoint Presentation - Capacity building for partners](#)

A short presentation of EMPL-funded **Social Services Helpdesk** project followed. The project, launched in May 2022 and co-funded by the ESF+, gathers 16 European organisations, with EASPD in the lead, and will cover 10 EU Member States. It serves as a one-stop-shop to make partners aware of funding opportunities and help social services access EU funds while fostering relationships between the managing authorities and the authorities and partners responsible for designing social services.

The representative of SG Europe and ONCE (one of the helpdesk partners in Spain) shared her experience as helpdesk partner in Spain: first workshop took place in November 2022 and gathered a wide range of stakeholders (national and regional ESF+ managing authorities, ministries, NGOs and civil society). Here, time and staff resources are the key issues. Smaller entities are de facto excluded because of the administrative burden.

Representative of SG Europe and ONCE also mentioned a good practice i.e. a toolkit created by her organisation representing persons with disabilities in Spain to allow persons with disabilities and the organisation to meaningfully participate in ESF monitoring committees. The aim was to “translate EU language into normal language”. She also announced the upcoming publication of the first set of conclusions derived from the work on the project.

6. *New initiatives*

New European Bauhaus

REGIO presented the idea behind the New European Bauhaus (NEB), illustrated it with concrete examples of European cities, and explained its link to Cohesion Policy. The idea is to work with Member States to mainstream the values of the NEB in the Partnership Agreements and Programmes and to work with managing authorities to have specific calls for NEB.

The NEB includes a pilot project of support to 20 small municipalities (less than 100.000 inhabitants) that is currently taking place. 20 place-based projects were selected to receive support (including participation of experts, needs assessment, project development and planning and implementation roadmap) via a technical assistance programme.

Additionally, a first dedicated call in support of NEB projects for innovative actions under the European Urban Initiative (EUI) was launched in October 2022 and is open until 18th January 2023, where REGIO expects to select at least 10 flagship projects.

Finally, REGIO is organising the NEB prizes: The call is open until end Jan 2023⁵ and it has three categories (classic, with specific focus on education or for young people). The winners will be announced 22 June in Brussels.

[Link to the PowerPoint presentation – New European Bauhaus](#)

- CEE Bankwatch asked for the state of play of the mainstreaming of the NEB. REGIO answered that there are MS that are more engaged than others but all of them have included some NEB elements in most of the programmes. The idea is to get their best practices and then show other Member States the best projects that can be carried out under this initiative.

EUTeens4Green and Innovative implementation of the partnership principles.

REGIO presented unit REGIO.E1 as competence centre with the motto “Good Governance”. This motto implies especial efforts to create administrative capacity to manage EU funds (but also for State aids and public procurement) and to foster participation. For encouraging participation, REGIO is carrying out two pilot projects:

EUTeens4Green is a project targeting young people with the aim of involving youth in cohesion policy meaningfully. As the youth are interested in the green transition, this pilot project focuses on the Just Transition areas, where there is a risk that the transition will not be inclusive. A call for expression of interest is open until 9 January to select projects run by young people (15-24) that engage social groups negatively affected by the transition to a green economy. More information about the call is available online: [EUTeens4Green](#)

The idea is that the youth act as decision-makers: they will identify people in risk of exclusion during the green transition and propose actions to involve them. They will count with facilitators that will accompany them in all stages of the project, including the application for this call.

⁵ [Home | New European Bauhaus Prizes 2023](#)

At the end of the project, participants will prepare a report on how to involve more youth in cohesion policy. The particularity is that REGIO is collaborating for the first time with a consortium: Startup Europe Regions Network, Youth and Environment Europe and CEE Bankwatch Network; Climate Europe is also involved.

Innovative implementation of the partnership principles is a pilot project (launched together with the OECD) that aims at a real engagement of citizens. Beyond access to information (open data and public communication) and citizens consultation (public consultations, meetings with stakeholders, workshops, dialogues, etc), citizens engagement implies actions such as participatory budgeting, deliberative processes, hackathons, citizen science, etc.

There was a first call for proposals where six (out of 7 projects) were selected, which will receive assistance (Training, support to implementation, etc.) from July 2022 until October 2023. For more information about the selected projects, consult the presentation.

REGIO announced that there will be a second call for proposals in the first 2023 quadrimester for cooperation between public authorities and civil society organisations to collect new examples of participatory process in cohesion policy. In the second half of March, REGIO will also organise a citizen's engagement workshop as part of the series of annual events "Good Governance for EU Cohesion Policy".

[Link to the Powerpoint presentation](#)

- ENSIE wanted to know to what extent climate Europe is involved in EUTEens4Green. REGIO explained that one of the organisations in the consortium is linked to Climate Europe, which is right now involved in the discussions regarding the communication strategy.
- Eurochild commented that they are disseminating the EUTEens4Green call and suggested to broaden the topic areas of the second call to include a focus on rural areas and territorial development.
- CEE Bankwatch Network remarked their participation in the first action of the Innovative implementation of the partnership principles and commented that many organisations lack capacity to engage with citizens. REGIO answered that the lack of money is not necessarily a barrier as there are ways to foster meaningful cooperation without the need of big sums. However, there are many funding opportunities offered not only by the EU, but also by the OECD for instance.
- EURADA offered their support to bring both pilot projects further.

7. Conclusions

In her final remarks, the Chair thanked partners for their engagement and for the good cooperation. The Chair also mentioned the creation of the Reflection group on the future of cohesion policy and announced the publication in December and January of the 4th Report of the implementation of macroregional strategies, the Annual Summary Report of the implementation of the 2014-2020 programming period and the Study on Harnessing Talents.

8. *Next meeting*

Finally, the Chair announced that the next meeting would take place in June 2023 and asked participants to let REGIO know by April if they want to include any particular point to the agenda for the next meeting.

9. *List of participants*

Barcelona Metropolitan Area

BWN - CEE Bankwatch Network

CAN Europe - Climate Action Network Europe

COPA - European farmers

Council of European Municipalities and Regions

CRPM - CPMR - Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

EAPB - European Association of Public Banks and Funding Agencies AISBL

Eurocities

ECRE - European council on Refugees and Exiles

ELARD - European LEADER Association for Rural Development

EN - Euclid Network

ENIL - European network on independent living Brussels

ENSIE - European Network of Social Integration Enterprises

EURADA - European Association of Development Agencies

Eurochild AISBL

Euromontana

European Committee of Regions

European economic and social committee

FSG - Fundación Secretariado Gitano

IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IGLYO - International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Interxer (LGBTQI) Youth and Student Organisation

SGI Europe