



[SUMMER 2015 ▶ No. 53]

# panorama

inforegio

## ▶ Europe goes digital

Cohesion policy invests  
in the connected society



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- ▶ Smart specialisation platform promotes sustainable energy
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Regional and  
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This magazine is printed in English, French and German on recycled paper.

It is available online in 22 languages at

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

The content of this issue was finalised in June 2015.

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015

ISSN 1725-8308

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Printed in Belgium





# ► EDITORIAL

**Corina Crețu**  
European Commissioner  
for Regional Policy

Europe's Digital Single Market Strategy could boost growth and create 3.8 million jobs per year, and central to making it a reality are the European Structural and Investment Funds.

More than EUR 20 billion will be available from the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund during 2014-2020 to invest in the building blocks of the Digital Single Market. This edition of *Panorama* highlights just how cohesion policy can help achieve this vision.

Enabling the 'connected society' is vital for growth and development in Europe, and investment in the services and infrastructure that underpin this will give Europe's citizens access to online services in the areas of e-government, e-inclusion, e-culture, e-health and e-justice.

These investments are key elements of the Commission's overarching plans to create a Digital Single Market. But to receive funding, proposals from Member States will have to fit into a well-designed and targeted policy strategy.

It is important that ICT investment is fully coordinated between regional and national levels. To improve the strategic capacity of Member States and to share best practices, substantial support has been provided by the Commission to help prepare some national strategies for digital growth.

## 25 years of Interreg

This year we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of European Territorial Cooperation. The Interreg funding programme has been highly appreciated over the years, and

has supported the cooperation efforts of regions and cities to bring people together and develop common solutions for shared problems, whether in the area of innovation, health, infrastructure, education, training or energy. Some examples of these initiatives are contained in these pages, illustrating that Interreg has become without doubt an important cornerstone of European cohesion policy.

A programme of events is already underway to celebrate the anniversary culminating in the '25 years of Interreg' conference in Esch-Belval, Luxembourg, 15-16 September. It will be a time to celebrate achievements over the past quarter century. It will also be the occasion to reflect on our vision for the future 'Interreg 2040' and a three month public consultation will be launched to look at the policy challenges in border regions, the concerns of people who live there and the remaining obstacles to be overcome.

## Further progress on Operational Programmes

Steady progress is also being made in approving Member States' ESI Fund Operational Programmes. The majority of proposals have now been adopted and the remaining programmes should have the green light by the end of 2015, allowing investment to begin on a wide number of key EU priorities such as energy security, climate action, the digital economy, urban development and support for SMEs.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Crete'.

# ► COHESION POLICY TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN DELIVERING EUROPE'S DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

**Developing the Digital Single Market is a key priority for the European Union as it strives to boost competitiveness and growth, and cohesion policy and the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds will be central to making it happen.**

More than EUR 20 billion will be available from the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund during 2014-2020 to invest in the building blocks of the Digital Single Market.

Vital areas for investment are the infrastructure and digital networks – high speed broadband – which will receive some one third of the available funding, amounting to around EUR 6 billion. Up to EUR 10 billion will be invested in the digital economy for the development of ICT products and services and the expansion of the e-commerce market. A further EUR 2 billion will go into developing the 'connected society' in terms of promoting the continued expansion of online services in the areas of e-government, e-inclusion, e-culture, e-health and e-justice.

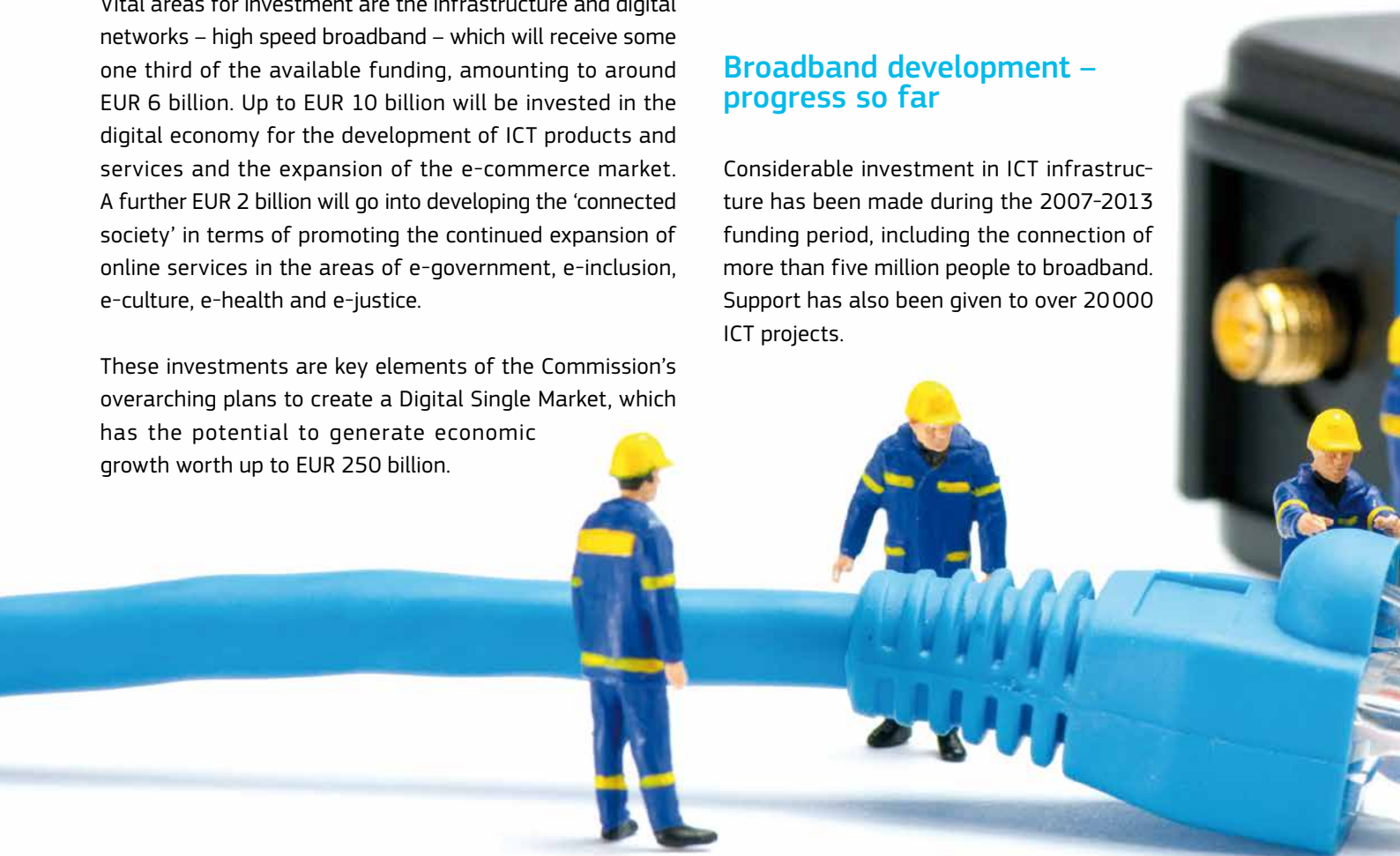
These investments are key elements of the Commission's overarching plans to create a Digital Single Market, which has the potential to generate economic growth worth up to EUR 250 billion.

Funds will also be available to support the implementation of the legislative initiatives related to the Digital Single Market, as well as boosting the administrative capacity in Member States to apply the legislation.

The ESI Funds will additionally help leverage further funding from national public and private sources to accelerate the positive impact of the Digital Single Market in all regions. These investments should help Member States, businesses and citizens to make the most of the opportunities offered by the Digital Single Market.

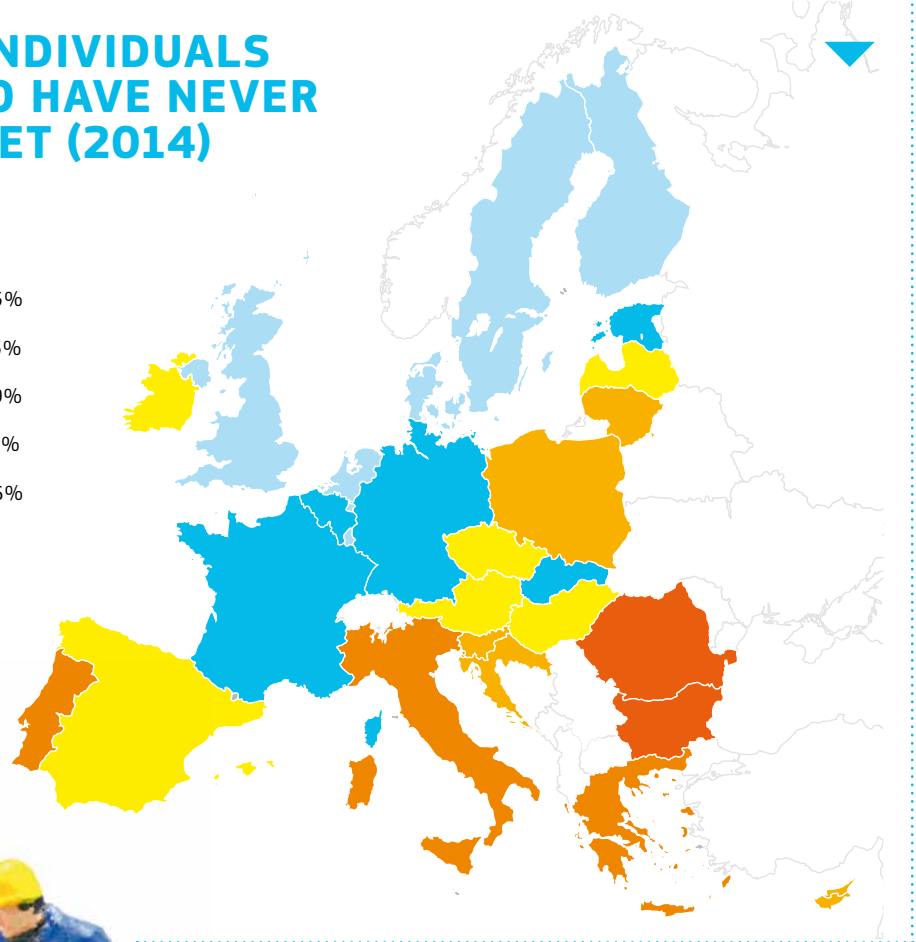
## Broadband development – progress so far

Considerable investment in ICT infrastructure has been made during the 2007-2013 funding period, including the connection of more than five million people to broadband. Support has also been given to over 20 000 ICT projects.



## PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS (AGED 16-74) WHO HAVE NEVER USED THE INTERNET (2014)

DK 2.62%	AT 15.1%	PT 30.5%
LU 4.05%	CZ 15.7%	IT 31.5%
NL 4.95%	IE 16.3%	EL 32.9%
FI 5.52%	LV 20.6%	BG 37.1%
UK 5.53%	ES 21.4%	RO 38.6%
SE 5.5%	HU 21.5%	
DE 11%	SL 24.1%	
FR 12.1%	LT 25%	
EE 12.4%	HR 27.7%	
BE 12.9%	CY 28%	
SK 14.6%	PL 28.1%	



Source: Eurostat Community survey on ICT usage



A major part of the rollout costs of high-speed broadband are linked to the use of existing 'passive' infrastructure, bottlenecks related to coordination of civil engineering work, complex permit granting procedures, etc. To reduce the cost of deploying high-speed broadband networks in the future it will be mandatory to include broadband fibre capacity when building physical infrastructure for utilities such as gas and electricity. All such works will have to conform to the EU Directive relating to this (Directive 2014/61/EU) from July 2016.

### Rural focus

Broadband infrastructure investment in urban areas is generally quite profitable and not in need of public support. The focus of ESI Fund interventions has therefore been on rural areas.

Both the ERDF and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development are in the position to fund the expansion of broadband and a coordination mechanism is being set up within the Commission to make optimum use of these financing facilities.

Projects have to be technically feasible and also not infringe the rules of competition. Respect for the EU State aid

## EU FUNDED PROJECTS HELPING TO CREATE THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET



### ►BROADBAND NETWORKS

#### RAIN project, Lithuania

Broadband is being rolled out across Lithuania to bring fast and switched-on Internet access to 98% of rural areas. The RAIN project had the objective of improving access to broadband in rural areas and achieve 98% broadband coverage in Lithuania by 2014. Some 4400km of broadband cables have been laid, with network infrastructure and 775 sub-district and municipal connection points installed. As a result, 660000 citizens (20.6% of the country's population), 2000 businesses and 9000 public institutions can now benefit from broadband. The creation of backhaul networks (i.e. middle-mile) in not-served areas has reduced the entry barriers (by lowering investment costs) for commercial operators thereby encouraging them to extend their broadband network coverage in last mile in rural areas. The RAIN project is also providing connectivity to many public institutions (e.g. 524 public libraries), contributing to increased digital literacy among sectors of the population at risk of exclusion.



### ►RURAL FAST INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

#### B4RN project, UK

In Lancashire, UK, 20 small villages and surrounding farms have been connected as a result of the B4RN project. More than 2000 people have access to internet services at speeds of 1 gigabyte/second for just GBP 30 per month. Lancashire is the seventh poorest region in Northern Europe, largely rural, and typical of many areas that could benefit from basic broadband access. By equipping rural areas with future-proof connections, Europe can gain a competitive infrastructure advantage which could have countless positive knock-on benefits, including cheaper and better farming, reversing depopulation by promoting remote working, boosting tourism and e-commerce and sustaining the rural social fabric. Fast internet services are key to access to e-health and e-government services.

### ►E-GOVERNMENT AND OPEN DATA

#### Open Data Gencat

The portal of the government of Catalonia publishes public sector information aiming to foster its use and reuse of information. Accessible information comes from different public organisations of the Catalan Government and is grouped into an easily searchable data catalogue. Data is available in different formats, most of which are standard, so they may be reused easily. The portal currently provides more than 1400 datasets from 15 regional public authorities and departments (e.g. maps, tourist information, socioeconomic indicators, employment offers and cultural events).

### ►E-HEALTH

#### Health Innovation Platform

One of the most remarkable examples of using ESI Funds for e-health can be found in Galicia with the Health Innovation Platform. The platform supports projects that develop innovative healthcare through Public Procurement of Innovation (PPI) mechanisms. The platform has also developed the IANUS system of electronic medical records that makes clinical information available to all health centres and hospitals and to all pharmacies in Galicia (in total 36000 healthcare professionals are connected).



framework is a significant issue. In areas where the market does not deliver the necessary infrastructure investment, the use of State aid is permitted subject to assessment.

## ICT products and e-commerce

A targeted area of future funding is to strengthen ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health. ICT measures may also receive support under other thematic objectives, and they are also included in many smart specialisation strategies. By developing a well thought out smart specialisation strategy regions are able to identify the priorities for ICT investment which are most pertinent for their territory.

European Structural and Investment Funds are not only to be seen as financial support, but also as a policy tool to support public authorities in defining their strategy and planning their administrative and investment effort.

## Strategic digital plans

The requirements under the reformed cohesion policy for better pre-investment analysis (*ex ante* conditionalities) is acting as a good stimulus for better thinking about broadband investment needs and has led to a more strategic, fact-based approach to digital investments.

Funding proposals have to fit into a well-conceived comprehensive and targeted policy strategy that takes into account all national/regional assets, competitive advantages and business potential.

It is important that ICT investment is fully coordinated between regional and national levels. To address the weak policy/strategic capacity of many Member States and to share best practices, substantial support has been provided by the Commission to help prepare some national strategies for digital growth.

## Mapping of priorities

A comprehensive mapping of innovation priorities and specialisation strategies has been undertaken across the EU. It is based on an analysis of the current generation of innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) which are the cornerstone of the reformed cohesion policy. During the 2014-2020 programming period, regional and national policy makers are required to develop a RIS3 before investing ERDF resources in research and innovation.

This approach helps leverage public and private funds towards smart specialisation priorities which are identified through an entrepreneurial discovery process.

Around 15 % of RIS3 priorities will be geared towards ICT. Poland, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal are focusing most on ICT in their regional and national RIS3s. Big (open) data, smart grids and cities, IT security, e-health, e-tourism and industry 4.0 are among the most widely chosen priorities.

## e-Government

The EU's new e-government strategy will focus on urgent actions, such as the interconnection of the business registries, the development of the 'Once Only Principle' and a 'Single Digital Gateway'.

The 'Once Only Principle' means that people and businesses should have to provide information to a public administration only once. The aim is to cut red tape so that users do not have to submit the same data and fill in the same forms again and again.

Transition towards full e-procurement and interoperable e-signatures needs to be accelerated as they provide for trusted and transparent electronic interaction, in particular benefitting small innovative companies and start-ups. By September 2018, public procurement offers will have to be submitted electronically.

The current e-Government Action Plan is coming to an end in 2015. It has been an important tool for coordination between Member States and the Commission to modernise public administration. It notably enabled major steps in e-identification, guaranteeing the identity of a person online while making sure their data is processed in a secure way.

A better connection of e-government services will cut red tape not only for public administration but also for citizens and businesses and e-government services that are being developed in different Member States should be able to communicate with each other and not develop in isolation. It is important also that e-government investments are aligned with public sector reform and modernisation so as to improve efficiency and user-friendliness and not just digitise bureaucracy.

### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/newsroom/news/2015/05/cohesion-policy-supports-the-digital-single-market](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2015/05/cohesion-policy-supports-the-digital-single-market)



►Umeå Hamn, where links to the outer harbour have been developed through an electrified railway and adjustments to the E12 highway. The investments have strengthened the Umeå logistical hub.

# ►ÖVRE NORRLAND

A SPARSELY POPULATED, BUT INNOVATIVE, REGION



**Övre Norrland in Sweden is part of Europe's Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA). The region comprises around 10% of the total EU land area, but less than 0.5% of the EU's total population lives there. Övre Norrland covers Västerbotten and Norrbotten counties and includes parts of Sápmi, the geographical**

**area that is the historical homeland of the Sami people. Panorama spoke to Erik Bergqvist, Chairman of the regional board, Västerbotten.**

►How did the negotiations go for the adoption of the 2014-2020 operational programme (OP) in Övre Norrland? What has been different this time, in comparison with previous negotiations?

Västerbotten County coordinated the development and drafting of the ERDF OP in Övre Norrland. The programme content is based on regional development strategies, adopted recently after extensive consultation at local, regional and national level, and in line with the European Code of Conduct for partnership and European Structural and Investment Funds.

Programme writing and the national negotiations took until the spring of 2014. The Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation then entered into dialogue with the European Commission DG for Regional and Urban Policy, with contributions from the regional OP writers during the process.

Negotiations were intense, detailed and up against tight deadlines. The most extensive discussions concerned ways of making small, yet crucial, preconditional investments in broadband and transport infrastructure, to the benefit of the region's businesses. The discussion came as a surprise to us, given that the European Parliament and Council of Ministers had previously indicated support for this type of investment in our area. We are delighted that our proposals were finally included in the OP.

The Europe 2020 strategy and the partnership principle have guided the programming work, which was not the case in previous negotiations. Unfortunately, the coordinating and guiding function that the Partnership Agreement was intended for was weak in the Swedish programming work. The focus on few priorities and results was also new, though positive, but Övre Norrland would have wished for slightly more management flexibility to be able to respond better to actual regional needs. We are keen to hold on to Europe 2020 and the partnership principle



in the forthcoming negotiations, and we hope that there will be more time allowed for preparation and investigation into regional adaptation.

Övre Norrland has enjoyed an excellent working relationship and dialogue over the years with the Commission and would have wished that communication and negotiations had been conducted to a greater degree in the form of tripartite discussions, which included the regional OP writers. We believe that would have simplified the negotiation process and allowed us to outline more clearly the specific conditions that prevail in our sparsely populated area.

### ►How can cohesion policy contribute to the economic development of your region?

Övre Norrland is a strong, specific and promising region. Businesses and academic institutions use and/or challenge climatic and geographic conditions such as the cold, dark winters, distance, demographics and sparsity to generate innovation and enterprise. Distances within the region and to external markets are long, but Övre Norrland is rich in attractive natural resources such as minerals, forestry and energy. Alongside the more traditional business clusters, is a rapidly-growing creative industry within ICT and culture, processes that need extra support to create new, stronger clusters for innovation on Europe's leading edge.

Thanks to cohesion policy, the region will be able to increase competitiveness and employment within its strong areas (Smart Specialisation). By supporting more innovation, enterprises and clusters, improving communications, boosting the use of digital technology and developing international business cooperation, Övre Norrland can contribute to continued development and attractiveness in its own region and the rest of Europe.

### ►What are the pros and cons of the new approach of combining different funds and financial instruments? How do you ensure consistency and complementarity?

Övre Norrland welcomes the Commission's ambitions for fund coordination, which means new opportunities and solutions for the optimising of resources and more coherent development of the programme area. Each step taken by a project can have greater power and influence by attracting investment from other funds or by building capacity for participation in the EU's sector programmes such as Horizon 2020, COSME and CEF.

We believe that the Swedish programme structure, with its 'one fund, one programme' principle run by several authorities and based on different geographical areas (NUTS level),

in which some OPs are classed as regional whilst others are national with regional plans, makes it hard to ensure proper coordination between funds. The current method of fund coordination avoids overlaps, but fails to create interaction between various funds to gain more value. Övre Norrland therefore advocates the development of multi-fund programmes.

### ►There is a general call for more simplified management of EU Funds: how can your region help with this objective in concrete terms?

It is essential to strengthen the role of regions when implementing and managing the Swedish ESI Fund programmes. Appropriate organisations for increased influence are the authorities with regional development responsibility within the respective programme areas.

At regional level, helping applicants for project funds to find 'one way in' is urgent. Applications should be based on what will be achieved and how the project aligns with regional, national and EU aims. From this basis, relevant financing can be put together for the applicant.

Applicants find it hard to navigate the financing system, and often lack the capacity and resources to develop a project idea. But regions can help with platforms and fora for generating ideas, advise and steer the applicant towards the right financing, provide process support and guidance in how to formulate an application, and how a project should be documented. We encourage harmonisation between rules, forms, reviewing costs, etc.

### ►Now that the OP has been adopted, what are the next steps?

The priority must be to encourage new project ideas, prioritise the most important projects and to plan and prepare for the next programme period. One step of the work is that we joined forces with the other 13 regions of the NSPA area to start an OECD study to map and analyse what are the conditions, challenges and development opportunities in the northernmost regions of Norway, Sweden and Finland. We will be happy to provide more details on the OECD study in due course.

#### ►FIND OUT MORE

<http://regionvasterbotten.se/toppmeny/om-oss/in-english/>

# ▶FOCUS FOR GALICIA SHIFTS FROM CONVERGENCE TO COMPETITIVENESS



Cohesion policy investment over the last 25 years, and sound management of EU funds, has helped Galicia overcome its isolation both in Spain and Europe. Alberto Núñez Feijóo, President of the region, talks to *Panorama* about the challenges facing Galicia in the new programming

period and the region's focus on objectives to continue its development.

▶How did the negotiations go for the adoption of the 2014-2020 operational programmes (OP) in Galicia? What has been different this time, in comparison with previous negotiations?

Preparation of the ERDF Galicia 2014-2020 Operational Programme involved a strong consultation process between the representatives of the European, national and regional administration. Social and economic partners and representatives of Galician civil society have also participated in this process through a specific website and electronic mailbox, set up exclusively for them to make contributions to various elements of the programme.

The main change has been to enhance the strategic approach of programming ERDF in Galicia and clearly orientate the programme towards results. The OP will be managed, for the first time, exclusively by the Autonomous Community, while state governmental bodies will be responsible for managing multiregional OPs under complementarity criteria.

In addition, we have joined the group of 'more developed regions'. The safety net is essential as it will allow a smooth transition and, at the same time, maintain the leverage effect of the ESI Funds, taking advantage of both the co-financing rates and thematic concentration structures, typical of transition and less developed regions.

▶How can cohesion policy contribute to the economic development of your region?

Cohesion policy investment in Galicia over the last 25 years has helped our convergence with the EU. We aim to continue investing in objectives that contribute the most to the development of our region, to achieve sustainable growth in the medium- and long-term based on a knowledge-intensive and job creating production model with higher added value. We must also commit to a fundamental challenge facing the entire continent to reverse the demographic situation.

A few decades ago our main challenge was to overcome the isolation from Spain and Europe; our great challenge today is to improve our competitiveness, in line with Europe 2020 and our smart specialisation strategy.

The new OP comes at a crucial time, when there are signs of a turnaround in our economy. At the same time, consequences of the crisis linger, which calls for thorough work in setting priority actions.

In short, we have to achieve the maximum efficiency and greatest impact in the use of programme resources.

▶What are the pros and cons of the new approach of combining different funds and financial instruments? How do you ensure consistency and complementarity?

Bringing together common rules into a single regulation for all ESI Funds has made life easier for bodies responsible for planning and programming. It also promotes greater complementarity, coordination and consistency between all interventions by encouraging an integrated use of the funds.

To ensure the necessary coordination between the various instruments managed in Galicia, a Fund Coordination Committee was established in 2007-2013 as an advisory and interdepartmental body to make the best use of resources.



►The ERDF support to the biopharmaceutical company Biofabri, for equipment and facilities to launch a manufacturing laboratory for probiotics, highlights Galicia's focus on innovative investments aimed at business growth.

Great coordination efforts were made in the programming phase by the different departments involved in ERDF issues (ICT, R&D, low carbon economy) to ensure complementarity between the various ERDF-financed actions.

We propose a hybrid model to support SMEs, using both financial instruments and grants. Instruments with greater impact on development should be used and ways found to enhance growth-oriented funding, regardless of the implementation method used.

Our OP advocates the use of financial instruments, particularly in the areas of innovation and competitiveness, with more than 50% of allocations for SME support to be managed with non-repayable grants. In 2007-2013, we launched a JEREMIE instrument, which will serve as a model for the implementation of further financial instruments under the new framework.

Moreover, these resources will be complemented by interventions through the OP SME Initiative, which hopes to mobilise over EUR 4 billion in loans throughout Spain.

**►There is a general call for more simplified management of EU Funds: how can Galicia help with this objective in concrete terms?**

The opinion 'Recommendations for better spending', which I presented in the Committee of the Regions in October 2013, encouraged regional and subregional authorities to pursue reductions in the administrative burden, with initiatives such as standard costs, simplified reporting and controls, standardised procedures or implementation of 'one-stop shops'.

In Galicia we applied these management simplification proposals by reducing the number of bodies involved in the

implementation of the OP, prioritising proposals by those with more of a direct competence on each priority.

Galicia was a pioneer in using standard costs for justifying investments, introducing a standard costs model in 2009 for financing educational expenses. This approach improved the system of expense justification, reducing the allocation of human and material resources to administrative tasks and improving efficiency in management procedures.

In 2014-2020, we will enhance the use of simplified cost options, in areas such as research and innovation, reducing the administrative burden and focusing on results. We are also progressing towards the consolidation of e-Government, in line with the e-cohesion model.

**►Now that the OP has been adopted, what are the next steps?**

The approval of the OP ERDF Galicia 2014-2020 marked a turning point for the bodies responsible for ensuring proper management of the programme. The key challenge now is to put in place a sound and effective management and control system, laying the foundation for achieving the expected results and ensuring that EU funding focuses on projects with higher added value.

Once all the management structures are in place, almost two years will have elapsed since the start of the programming period. This is an additional challenge, which will force us to make greater efforts in order to pick up the pace.

**►FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.xunta.es](http://www.xunta.es)



# ► EVALUATING COHESION POLICY FUNDING

## WHAT TODAY'S ECONOMISTS CAN TELL US

**The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund (ESF) are the primary means available at EU level to support the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. But how should these funds be invested to have the most effect on growth and employment?**

This question is particularly pertinent when national budgets are under such pressure and the funding per capita of these three funds in real terms is some 16 % less in the 2014-2020 period than in the previous one.

To evaluate the use of ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources in the 2007-2013 period, a group of eminent academics was brought together by the Commission in January 2015.

The meeting set out to assess the economists' views about where the available EU funding should have best been invested to achieve the twin objectives of growth and job creation.

Economic theory, it was said, does not provide a simple explanation for the different rates of growth found in countries and regions. A variety of factors and conditions are at work, whose importance varies over time and space. Thus adopting the same policies which were successful somewhere else is unlikely to work and might well produce contrary perverse effects. Just because regions have the same level of GDP per head, this does not imply that the same policy mix should be applied.

Identifying the most appropriate policy mix requires a comprehensive knowledge of the regional factors at work and conditions in place. Bottom up approaches have often proved more effective than top down ones.

The crisis has also served to embed inequality and social exclusion, which harms social cohesion but equally damages the prospects for economic growth. In many countries the European Structural and Investment Funds are the main or only source of finance to tackle this issue.

### Where and how to invest

The academics looked at where funds should be invested and how to generate the greatest impact on growth and jobs. Analyses of the impact of policy vary enormously depending on the data used, the estimation methods applied and the time periods considered.

In practice, our understanding of the circumstances under which regional policy is effective is limited. This is partly due to a lack of evaluations assessing the impact of interventions and the difficulty in identifying causality.

Despite this, cohesion policy is still seen as being on the right track in activating the levers of growth and job creation. The consensus is that the policy should continue to do what it has been doing, but to do it better by making improvements in all phases of the policy process.

This starts for many regions in the design of the programmes which should be tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the region. This demands not only an understanding of the factors at work but also a capacity for strategic management and the ability to identify opportunities for development and ways to realise them.

The key to a successful policy is to do different things in different places but everywhere in a 'goal oriented way' by setting benchmarks and measuring progress.

'Doing better' also means improving policy implementation, from administration to monitoring and evaluation, by strengthening administrative capacity.

Support has to be focused on upgrading activities both upstream and downstream in the global value chains and careful reflection on the type of instrument used is required.

The Commission has a role to play in encouraging improvements in policy implementation through incentives, by rewarding good performance through, for example, some form of contingency fund – and through penalties and withdrawing funding for poor performance or deviating from an agreed strategy.

### Which regions for most impact?

Looking at the question of which regions should be funded for the most effect on growth and jobs, the discussion concluded that it has not been demonstrated that concentrating investment in more advanced areas increases the overall growth rate. Recent evidence has shown dynamism and job creation in intermediate and peripheral regions of the EU. Indeed, the OECD reports that two thirds of growth in recent years has taken place outside of the main agglomerations.

The return on investment is potentially higher in the periphery than in the core regions where a relatively small amount of funding can make a big difference. Concentrating support in one type of region might well leave significant growth potential untapped. What is more, concentrating funds in just a small number of regions might turn out to be a more risky strategy.

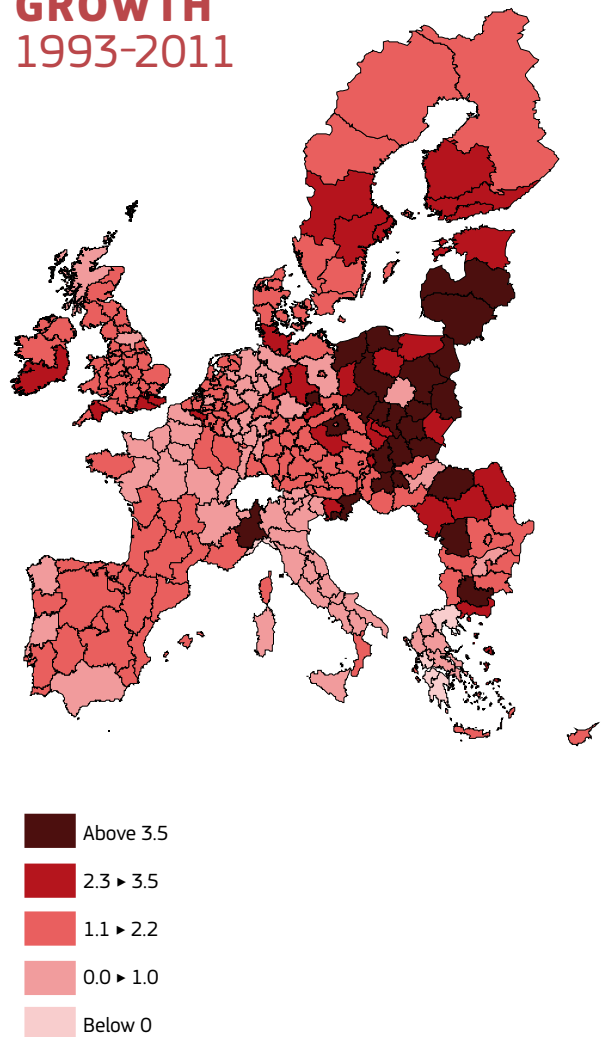
### Importance of the institutional and policy context

Governance is important and must be improved to increase the effectiveness of policies, the experts felt. It is difficult to measure the quality of government, but results obtained so far tend to indicate that it is a critical factor of policy success.

'Doing cohesion policy better' has therefore much to do with improving institutions. There is a clear need for capacity building in many Member States at all stages of the design and implementation of policy. The Commission is potentially an important player in this regards in terms of giving advice and incentives.

This is more likely to have an effect on the present circumstances than before, because both national and regional authorities are looking for ways to get out of the crisis.

## GDP PER CAPITA GROWTH 1993-2011



Source: *Ex post* evaluation 2007-2013 of ERDF/CF, draft report

### What's next?

The outcome of the seminar feeds into the overall *ex post* evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period, currently being carried out by Member States and the Commission. Altogether the evaluation is made up of 17 different thematic work packages. Most work packages include seminars with Member States in order to facilitate a discussion for the further development of regional policy. A synthesis report will be published in spring 2016.

#### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/)

# ► IN YOUR OWN WORDS

VIEWS FROM STAKEHOLDERS ON COHESION  
POLICY 2014-2020

Panorama  
welcomes your  
contributions!

Make your voice heard. In **Your Own Words** is the section of *Panorama* where stakeholders at local, regional, national and European level outline their plans for the 2014-2020 period.

*Panorama* welcomes your contributions in your language, which we may feature in future editions. Please contact us for further information about deadlines and guidelines for your contribution.

► [regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu](mailto:regio-panorama@ec.europa.eu)

## ► THE NETHERLANDS

### ► THE SOUTH NETHERLANDS INNOVATION STRATEGY TRIGGERS ECONOMIC COOPERATION



**Regional economic cooperation in the South Netherlands is picking up steam. The Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) is being embraced and things are happening fast. Thanks to intensive collaboration in the development of this regional economic strategy the region is witnessing the creation of new networks of businesses, knowledge**

**institutions, cities, provinces and implementing organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and Regional Development Associations.**

There are many good practices. Business leaders, knowledge institutions and government unite into regional Triple Helix organisations and collaborate more and more closely on topic-specific programmes such as a biobased economy, life science, logistics and agrifood. Their agendas are harmonised and the right projects are prepared.

Cities, triggered by the RIS3, have prepared a collective South Netherlands strategy for the transition to a low-carbon economy. And the Chambers of Commerce and the Regional Development Associations, inspired by the same RIS3 and the aforementioned developments, join forces to keep everything transparent for SMEs in the South of the Netherlands. They provide a shared service concept and streamline the tool kit.

European cohesion policy funds are important to the region, especially in these times of dwindling government resources, but they are also reigniting the collaboration that the economy so desperately needs, and on just the right scale. The three provinces in the South Netherlands (North Brabant, Limburg and Zeeland) have enough clout to be an independent negotiating partner with Brussels, The Hague, Flanders and North Rhine-Westphalia. And the South Netherlands is recognisable and does not restrict the sub-regional economic clusters with blurred provincial boundaries.

All of this has not gone unnoticed by the Dutch government, who fortunately do not consider this development a threat to national economic policy, but rather a reinforcement of it. Even the top sectors are being 'managed', by means of the RIS3, with such excellent results that the national



government is prepared to decentralise the corresponding stimulus resources to the district level. The South Netherlands will expressly play a leading role in this process.

The RIS3 is the glue that binds it all together. Drafted according to the prescriptions of the European Commission, the RIS3 has truly grown into a showpiece for the South Netherlands region. It is our ambition to make living and working in the South Netherlands even nicer than it already is. That is why we are actively promoting RIS3 and OPZuid to the wider world, in a language that everyone understands. Not only to share our success, but first and foremost to inspire, and to attract productive new contributions.

#### TH. J. F. M. (THEO) BOVENS

*Chair of the Supervisory Committee for the 2014-2020 South Netherlands Operational Programme (OPZuid), Governor of the Province of Limburg*

#### ▶ IRELAND

## ▶ SOUTHERN AND EASTERN REGION PRIORITISES JOB CREATION AND RESEARCH



**Building on a wealth of experience and programming in Ireland and its regions, the design of the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020 was shaped by the needs of the region and within the scope of Europe 2020.**

Under a number of priorities our partners lead on schemes that hold job creation central to programme delivery and, where relevant, are seeking to strengthen the region's research, development and innovation standing. Commercialisation of research, job creation, connectivity and urban development, all threaded through with a commitment to environmental sustainability and equality, is the bedrock on which the programme is founded.

Under the Research Centres programme, Science Foundation Ireland has funded four new Research Centres at a cost of EUR 120 million over five years complemented by EUR 79 million from industry. The new centres are in the thematic areas of Future Networks and Communications (CONNECT) Dublin, Digital Platforms, Content and Applications (ADAPT), Software (LERO) and Geosciences Underpinning Sustainable Economic Development (ICRAG). The aim is to develop world-leading, large-scale research centres aligned with the 14 priority areas of research identified in the Research Prioritisation Exercise that will provide major economic impact for Ireland and its regions.

‘The National Broadband Programme will address an emerging digital divide evident in the more rural and sparsely populated parts of the region. It will do so by bringing high-speed next generation broadband to hitherto unserved settlements thus ensuring that all citizens have equal access.’

Enterprise Ireland through a network of Local Enterprise Offices (LEO) continues to deliver both hard and soft support to micro-enterprises. The LEOs are embedded in the Local Authorities offering a ‘one-stop shop’ suite of services to both start-ups and expanding businesses while supporting and providing mentoring and training. The National Broadband Programme will address an emerging digital divide evident in the more rural and sparsely populated parts of the region. It will do so by bringing high-speed next generation broadband to hitherto unserved settlements thus ensuring that all citizens have equal access.

Retrofit of social housing to improve energy efficiency in the housing stock will be rolled out across the region by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Urban Authorities will have an opportunity to access funding for integrated sustainable development initiatives that promise to enrich the fabric of urban areas and/or promote sustainable urban mobility.

#### DERVILLE BRENNAN

*Research and Communications Officer, Southern Regional Assembly*

► HUNGARY

## ► SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNED IN HAJDÚ-BIHAR COUNTY



**Hungary has committed itself to implementing a robust economic development programme for the 2014-2020 programming period, allocating 60 % of the EU funds available to this end. The Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (TOP) is committed to providing financial support to less developed regions and aims to identify and promote potential development areas that utilise the resources of all counties, regions and villages, including more disadvantaged areas.**

### Diversity of natural resources

Hajdú-Bihar is one of the biggest Hungarian counties and as part of the Northern Great Plain is one of the EU's under-developed areas. Natural resources greatly influence development in several economic sectors of the county, among which the most economically important is farmland. Agricultural products yielded by the favourable natural environment have taken the lead in the development of the county's food and light industries and they play a vital role in the local food and renewable energy industries.

The region is also rich in thermal waters and natural areas. Many towns have spa baths and Hajdúszoboszló is one

of the busiest health tourism destinations in Hungary and the world. The Hortobágy National Park, a protected area, is the signature site of international tourism in Hajdú-Bihar County.

‘Reducing the county-wide energy dependency demands a widespread use of sustainable energy. The aim is to build a stable, economically sustainable infrastructure that is based on renewable energy and efficient power.’

### Promoting resources through development

The focus for Hajdú-Bihar County's strategic development plans must be on the maintenance of the traditional values and endemic treasures of the Great Plains so future generations are also able to enjoy them. This calls for the creation of an economic and agricultural system which lends itself to sustainability. Reducing the county-wide energy dependency demands a widespread use of sustainable energy. The aim is to build a stable, economically sustainable infrastructure that is based on renewable energy and efficient power.

### Including people in innovation

The second biggest city in Hungary, Debrecen, is of national significance with an international airport and business-based innovation. As a regional centre, Debrecen prides itself in having created one of the most advanced institutional structures in Hungary, with the University of Debrecen being the largest employer throughout Hajdú-Bihar County. In the development of general, vocational and advanced-level education during the coming years, focus must be on economic aspects and on incentivising business involvement in training. Through its comprehensive 'Vigorous City' programme, Debrecen is aiming to become the innovation hub of the region.

The objective for development in Hajdú-Bihar is for an area that grows sustainably with the environment, while creating quality life for its population by profiting from its natural, social and economic attributes.

#### NÁNDOR CSEPREGHY

*Deputy State Secretary for Cohesion Policy  
Communication, Prime Minister's Office*

## ▶AUSTRIA

## ▶INVESTMENT IN GROWTH AND JOBS IN LOWER AUSTRIA



**Changed conditions and experience from previous funding periods have had a significant impact on the organisation and structure of the Lower Austria part of the 'investment for growth and jobs' programme for the period 2014-2020.**

## Substantive focus

The Europe 2020 strategy and new cohesion policy regulations have resulted in the operational programme having an increased focus on the areas of R&D, SME competitiveness and a low-carbon economy. This corresponds to the continuous development of programmes since Austria's accession to the EU in 1995. Whilst the content of the programmes in the two initial periods from 1995-1999 and 2000-2006 was considerably more differentiated, and the programmes were aimed towards the classic aim of achieving a balance, the 2007-2013 period saw a substantive focus on the Lisbon Strategy, which has been further strengthened in the current period.

## Structural changes

In parallel, there were reflections on organisational changes to the process, not least due to the increasing requirements of implementing the programme. Owing to the federal structure in Austria, the previous Structural Funds periods were implemented in nine separate regional programmes, some of which had very low levels of ERDF funding. Further reduction of the planned funds encouraged changes to be made to the programme structure, resulting after lengthy discussions between the nine regions concerned in an agreement to establish a common, Austria-wide programme. The Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK), which previously played a key coordinating role in the area of EU regional policy, was appointed as the managing authority, with the support of the regions and the Federal Government within the spirit of partnership.

## New implementation conditions

This new structure is accompanied by further efforts at reform, including reorganisation in Lower Austria. Specifically, there is now just one central regional funding body which is responsible for the ERDF. This not only brings benefits for potential recipients, but also enables the required know-how to be developed and adequate funds allocated, which guarantees a fair balance between cost and benefit. This rearrangement in the organisational structure goes hand-in-hand with the substantive development of the Lower Austrian programme and should create the foundation for ERDF funds to be processed efficiently and used in an effective and targeted way, which will form the basis for the successful implementation of the programme in the period 2014-2020.

**HENRIETTE LEUTHNER**

*Office of the Lower Austria Regional Government*

## ▶FRANCE

## ▶BRITTANY AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF THE ENERGY AND DIGITAL TRANSITION

**Brittany is a peninsula at the western edge of Europe. This geographical fact has always encouraged Bretons to be pioneers, because if they are not at the forefront of major innovations, they will certainly be among the last to benefit from them. That is why Brittany has placed itself decisively at the cutting edge of the energy and digital transition.**



Today, Brittany gets nearly 90% of its electricity from outside the region. However, it has significant natural resources, with 2 500 km of coastline exposed to the tides, waves and winds of the Atlantic Ocean and the Channel. Already a pioneer in renewable marine energy, with the first tidal power station in the world dating back to 1966, it is in a very strong



position to become one of the major European regions in this field. The potential is huge: bottom-fixed and floating offshore wind farms, tidal energy and wave energy.

The digital challenge is very closely linked to the energy challenge. The use of renewable energy, which is inherently decentralised, will make it necessary to develop interconnected smart networks. We will need to go a lot further than that, though: we could compare the fibre optic revolution to the arrival of electricity over a century ago. Especially outside metropolitan areas, high-speed connectivity will offer new opportunities to play an integral part in the economy of the 21st century.

The priorities Brittany is setting itself are those of the EU. European funds are therefore going to supply valuable support to help achieve this dual aim. They will make it possible to implement specific projects, such as the development of the port of Brest, specially designed to accommodate marine energy industries, or work to deploy fibre optic throughout the region. Thus, even at the tip of Brittany, we can hear Europe's heart beating.

#### PIERRICK MASSIOT

*President of the Regional Council of Brittany*

#### ► ITALY

## ► NEW APPROACH TO PROGRAMMING IN LOMBARDIA



**The drafting of the 2014-2020 ESF and ERDF Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) in Regione Lombardia has been characterised by a new approach in comparison with the last period.**

For the first time a single Managing Authority for both programmes has been established to lead the process of drafting and of negotiating with the regional partnership. This decision has promoted synergies between the Funds, which amount to nearly EUR 2 billion: this is particularly true as for 'inner areas' and 'sustainable urban development' policies, which have been designed to address rural areas and the most deprived urban communities.

Due to the international crisis, the ROPs are strongly focused on innovation and intelligent development through actions for enterprises in order to face the 'credit crunch' and to support research and development. The ROPs consider social and environmental innovation as the basis for the future of the region, in particular with actions on knowledge reinforcement.

By deciding to base the implementation of the programmes on their mutual integration and cooperation, Regione Lombardia has defined a deep process of participation and public involvement in order to make policies consistent with needs.

A major dialogue with social, environmental and economic partners has been developed: different kinds of instruments have been used such as public meetings or on-line surveys; both of them have been either open to citizens or more focused on specific needs (for example, a survey on innovation has been launched and an SEA performed).

Finally, a specific priority axis in the ESF ROP has recognised the crucial role for the success of public policies of the enhancement of the public administration 'capabilities' that will be involved in managing EU funds.

#### MARIA PIA REDAELLI

*Director – ESF and ERDF 2014-2020 Managing Authority, Regione Lombardia*



# ▶ EIB COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING EU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT



**Rocco L. Bubbico, Economist at the European Investment Bank, and former Policy Analyst at the European Commission DG for Regional and Urban Policy, considers the complementary links between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and EU regional policy, particularly in the context of the Investment Plan for Europe<sup>(1)</sup>.**

The links between European regional policy and the activities of the EIB are strong and are not restricted to the operational cooperation related to financial instruments. The Bank is mentioned 16 times in the Lisbon Treaty, but – beyond the articles dedicated to it – only twice in relation to policy objectives. The first is development cooperation, an area that the Bank supports by carrying out operations outside the EU, amounting to about 10% of its total lending volume. The second is Article 175, well known to the regional community, where the Bank is mentioned alongside the Structural Funds to contribute to supporting and achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The strategy of the EIB is to combine lending operations with advisory work and blending EIB and EU funding, in line with the political priorities established by the EU. The Bank also works directly with regions and cities, and in some countries they are the main partners for operations with the public sector. The exposure to local and regional authorities increased significantly during the economic crisis, more than to other public sector entities or EU central governments.

The EIB has been very active in recent years and it is now going through a challenging period, taking over more tasks for supporting the recovery of Europe and being at the centre of policy debates like never before. It is growing rapidly, too. The EUR 10 billion capital increase, approved by all EU Member States and launched in 2012, has generated a surge of the lending activities and a swift growth of the organisation. The Investment Plan for Europe, launched by the European Commission in late 2014, is now an additional challenge.

In this context, there is great potential for increasing the complementarity and coordination between the models adopted by the Bank and by the Commission. The Sixth Cohesion Report has shown that the crisis had a dramatic impact on the capacity of local authorities to support public investment projects, especially in the countries implementing tight fiscal consolidation measures.

There are areas – both policy areas and geographical areas – where the model of multi-annual programmes based on grants cannot be easily replaced for supporting public investment projects. This model is still essential to ensure the presence of the basic ingredients of development where these are missing. But in many areas, for instance SME support, the use of financial instruments can have a leverage effect on funding, and help to stimulate private investment.

In any case, both models need quality local governance and technical capability to succeed. For this reason, one of the main pillars of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) initiative is an advisory hub (European Investment Advisory Service) to provide guidance on projects and investments, using EU funds more efficiently through the reinforced use of financial instruments, and improving access to finance.

<sup>(1)</sup> The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the EIB and its shareholders.

▶ FIND OUT MORE  
[www.eib.org/about/invest-eu/index.htm](http://www.eib.org/about/invest-eu/index.htm)

# ▶ INTERREG TURNS 25

## PANORAMA CELEBRATES ITS KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**This year Interreg, the EU instrument which fosters cooperation beyond borders in Europe, celebrates its 25th anniversary. To mark the occasion, *Panorama* presents Interreg's five main areas of achievement over the years, illustrated through concrete projects which have contributed to building trust, connecting citizens and territories, creating healthy and safe environments, as well as supporting growth and jobs.**

### Interreg in brief

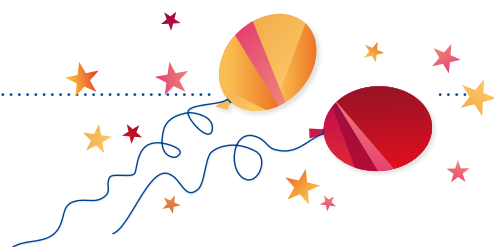
Created as a community initiative in 1990, Interreg and its three strands (cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation) has grown into the second goal of EU cohesion policy in 2014-2020. Interreg promotes cooperation across the 28 EU Member States, bringing EU citizens together regardless of their cultures and nationalities, to enhance our common prosperity. It also contributes to cross-border cooperation with accession countries (Interreg-IPA-CBC) as well as neighbouring countries (Interreg-ENI-CBC).

Interreg supports the development of all EU regions, with a particular focus on border regions which cover 37% of the EU population. It encourages regions to work together, to share good practices and to find common solutions. EU macro-regions, developed in recent years, play a key role in facilitating the joint responses to similar problems faced by European territories.

**‘Interreg, the smallest but finest piece of cohesion policy.’**

▶ JENS GABBE – ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN BORDER REGIONS

Although the budget for Interreg programmes financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), represents less than 3% of the EU cohesion policy budget, thousands of Interreg projects have managed to change the lives of millions of citizens, building bridges between people and organisations, and helping them to face common challenges.



## ▼ INVESTMENT PRIORITIES ICONS EXPLAINED

The fifth Interreg cycle in 2014-2020 is based on 11 investment priorities laid down in the ERDF Regulation, contributing to the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

### ▶ SMART

-  RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
-  INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES
-  COMPETITIVENESS OF SMEs
-  LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

### ▶ SUSTAINABLE

-  COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE
-  ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY
-  SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

### ▶ INCLUSIVE

-  EMPLOYMENT AND MOBILITY
-  SOCIAL INCLUSION
-  BETTER EDUCATION, TRAINING
-  BETTER PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

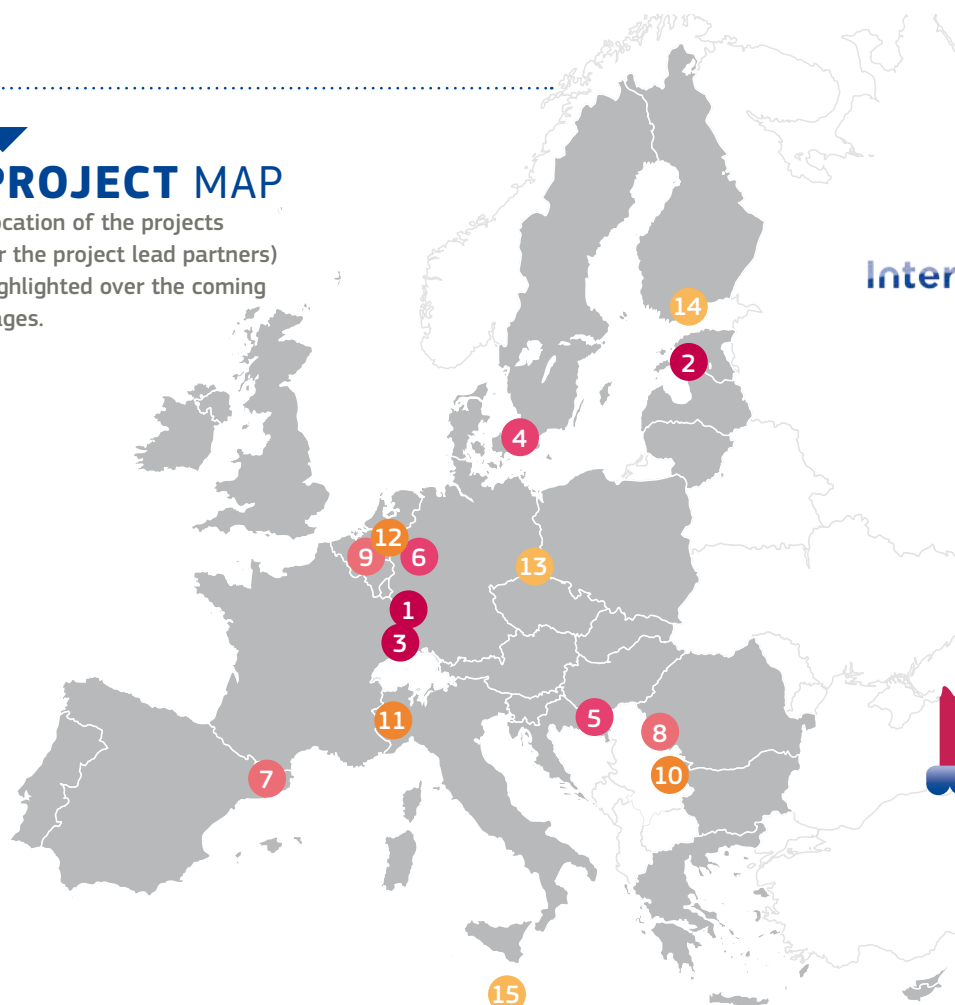


# ▶ PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## KEY INTERREG ACHIEVEMENTS OVER 25 YEARS

### PROJECT MAP

Location of the projects (or the project lead partners) highlighted over the coming pages.



## INTERREG IN 2015 KEY EVENTS

### 14 FEBRUARY

**#EULOVEWITHOUTBORDERS** competition culminated in the announcement of the winning couple on 9 May, Alexandra and Pierre, a Franco-German couple married on Europe Day.



### 15-16 SEPTEMBER

**'25 YEARS OF INTERREG' CONFERENCE, BELVAL, LUXEMBOURG**

▶ To celebrate #interreg25 achievements and elaborate a vision for the future (Interreg 2040).

▶ Organised by the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the European Union, European Commission and the INTERACT programme.

▶ Find out more:  
[www.interact-eu.net](http://www.interact-eu.net)

### 21 SEPTEMBER

**EUROPEAN COOPERATION DAY.** A series of events in which Commissioner Crețu will participate, celebrating 25 years of Interreg and opening a 3-month public consultation on the remaining obstacles faced by border citizens and businesses.

### 22 SEPTEMBER – 15 OCTOBER

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION INTERREG 25 ROADSHOW.** Visits and events will be organised with DG Regional and Urban Policy senior management to different EU internal borders, also promoting participation in the public consultation.



## TRUST BUILDING 'Stronger together'



Building trust is a precondition to cooperation between Europeans. Whether reconciling former enemies or transforming strangers into friends along borders that were closed only a decade ago, Interreg helps people identify their common purpose. As Jean Monnet said about the European integration project: 'We unite people'.

### 1 MAISON DE LA PETITE ENFANCE FRANCO-ALLEMANDE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME FRANCE-GERMANY (INTERREG A)

The cross-border crèche was established in 2014, near the Europe Bridge linking Strasbourg and Kehl. This childcare centre offers French and German children, from their earliest years, a multicultural education with bilingual staff and a pedagogical approach combining both national systems and based on openness.

*'It is a daily victory to see children from a border area play and grow together in true friendship.'*

► **MARIE-MADELEINE SCHWALLER** – Director of the Maison de la Petite Enfance franco-allemande



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
1 680 000

ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
350 000



### 2 ESTONIAN-LATVIAN AND LATVIAN-ESTONIAN DICTIONARIES CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME ESTONIA-LATVIA (INTERREG A)

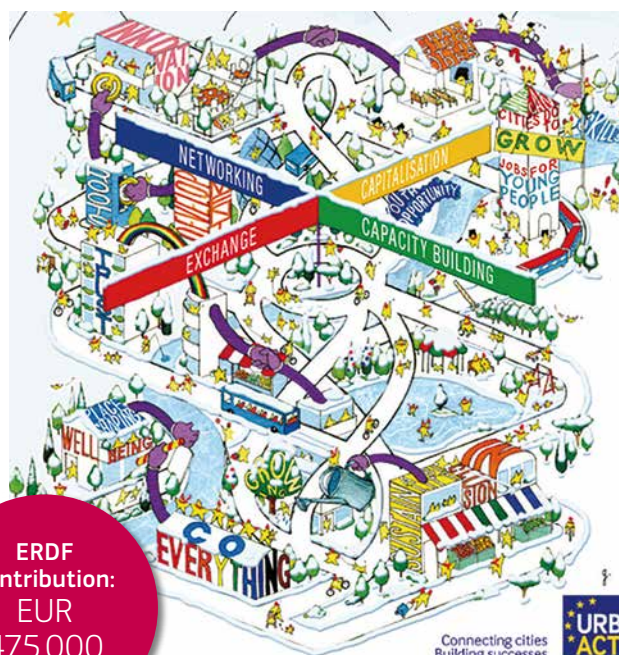
The dictionaries published in April this year are a novelty. With more than 40 000 entries, this unprecedented initiative aims at facilitating mutual understanding and exchange between Latvia and Estonia.

### 3 TOGETHER FOR TERRITORIES OF CO-RESPONSIBILITY INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME URBACT, PROJECT INVOLVING PARTNERS FROM PORTUGAL, ITALY, GREECE, POLAND, LATVIA, SWEDEN, BELGIUM AND FRANCE (INTERREG C)

To improve social inclusion in an urban environment, eight municipalities launched the TOGETHER project involving public authorities, citizens and stakeholders. Some 150 focus group discussions came up with concrete proposals to improve well-being in cities. The answers were collected via a consultative computer tool for citizens and should help public authorities in taking decisions.

*'For the first time people from different social groups came together to discuss different topical issues.'*

► **INGA JEKABSONE** – TOGETHER partner representing the city of Salaspils, Latvia



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
475 000

Connecting cities  
Building successes





## CONNECTIVITY

### 'Bringing People and Territories Together'

Connecting people and their territories is another precondition to European cooperation. If people cannot connect, they cannot work together. This is why Interreg has co-financed many connections, whether physical (bridges, crossing-points, local roads, transport schedules and ticketing) or virtual (ICT).



#### 4 CROSS-BORDER ÖRESUND METRO

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
SWEDEN-DENMARK (INTERREG A)

After the bridge financed by Interreg and opened in 2000, the inhabitants of Copenhagen and Malmö will see their connectivity transformed by the development of a cross-border metro system, linking the two cities. The feasibility study expects 40% reduction in commuting time and cleaner urban transport. The improvement of rail capacity across the centre of the Öresund Region should generate a better socio-economic development of the border region. *'After the bridge, time for the metro!'*



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
500 000



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
3 000 000

#### 5 DE-MINE – REHABILITATION OF LANDMINE CONTAMINATED SITES IN THE DRAVA-DANUBE AREA

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
HUNGARY-CROATIA (INTERREG-IPA-CBC)

The demining operations performed jointly by the Hungarian and Croatian public authorities improved security in the Drava-Danube area (some 1.5 km<sup>2</sup> on each side of the border). These operations are a precondition to first improving mobility across the border, then subsequently developing sustainable tourism in the region with the creation of cycling tours. The remaining landmines were a legacy from the 1990s conflict.

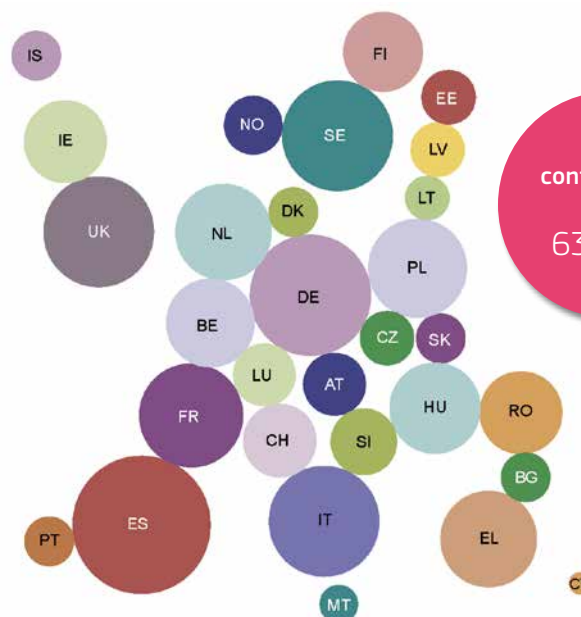
*'EU funds have allowed us, not only to remove a threat, but also to lay the beneficial and cohesive foundations for new synergies and opportunities on both sides of what used to separate us.'*

▶ **MR. MILJENKO VAHTARIĆ** – Acting Assistant Director  
of the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC)

#### 6 TRACC – TRANSPORT ACCESSIBILITY AT REGIONAL/LOCAL SCALE AND PATTERNS IN EUROPE

INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
ESPON, PROJECT INVOLVING PARTNERS FROM  
CZECH REPUBLIC, GERMANY, SPAIN, FINLAND,  
ITALY AND POLAND (INTERREG C)

TRACC aimed at improving accessibility via better transport infrastructure and supporting the development of sustainable freight. It explored the impacts of European and national policies to improve global, European and regional accessibility in the light of new challenges, such as globalisation, energy scarcity and climate change. The project provided a sound basis for accessibility checks and improvement across European regions, regardless of national borders.



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
630 000





## HEALTH

### 'A healthy environment improving citizens' well-being'

In line with European citizens' growing concern about health and the preservation of a healthy environment, Interreg projects have improved access to public health services and the well-being of patients across Europe. Over the last 25 years, the protection of the environment has been enhanced with an estimated 2 000 dedicated environmentally-friendly projects.



#### 8 TELEDIAG – DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-BORDER TELEDIAGNOSTIC AND TELECONSULTATION NETWORK IN HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME ROMANIA-SERBIA (INTERREG-IPA-CBC)

Mixing technologies and healthcare systems, this telemedicine network allows sharing of medical information and enables local doctors to consult specialists to secure more accurate diagnoses and explore the best treatment options. E-health represents a growing opportunity with over 150 000 patients already treated by participating partner institutions.

*'The project is an important first step for health institutions in the border region into a modern and prospective trend in medical communication.'*

► [DR. JON SFERA](#) – Project coordinator

IPA  
contribution:  
EUR  
976 000



#### 7 CROSS-BORDER HOSPITAL, Cerdanya CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME FRANCE-SPAIN-ANDORRA (INTERREG A)

The town of Puigcerdà hosts the first cross-border hospital in the world, providing the French and Spanish border population with a better healthcare system. From a feasibility study in 2003 to the opening in September 2014, it took 10 years to equip the hospital with 64 beds, 32 rooms, 3 operating theaters, 1 birth room and additional multi-purpose facilities. The medical and administrative staff receive the patients in 3 languages: French, Spanish and Catalan. Each local population can use its own national health card and benefit from its usual care system.

*'The new hospital improved the range of services offered to the Spanish population of Catalonia and extended these to the French population living in this mountainous region, close to the Cerdanya plateau. For the French inhabitants of the border region, access time to hospital health services went down, when every minute counts to save lives.'*

► [CATHERINE BARNOLE](#) – Project coordinator

ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
18 600 000



#### 9 TICKET TO KYOTO T2K – TOWARDS LOW CO<sub>2</sub>-EMISSION URBAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURES TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME NORTH WEST EUROPE (INTERREG B)

Five European public transport companies, committed to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and costs in public transport developed a joint transnational strategy based on an environmentally friendly behaviour on 3 topics: transport, renewable energy and climate change. Through the development of a standardised method to implement a CO<sub>2</sub> calculator, users are now informed of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions produced when they use public transport.

ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
6010 000





## SAFETY

### *'Ensuring safer living conditions'*



25 years of Interreg has also improved the well-being of European citizens by helping to create a safer and more secure environment. Among the initiatives taken have been numerous joint actions in risk prevention and management, tackling drug trafficking and illegal immigration. This cooperation has seen public services working together on some 1 900 Interreg projects striving towards safer living conditions for the benefit of European citizens.

#### **10 STRENGTHENING THE FORENSIC CAPABILITIES IN THE DOMAIN OF ORGANISED CROSS-BORDER CRIME PREVENTION IN THE FIELD OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING**

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
BULGARIA-SERBIA (INTERREG-IPA-CBC)

Fighting drugs trafficking at the Serbian-Bulgarian border to preserve security in the region required close cooperation between experts of both countries and enabled the creation of an information database for narcotics content. Workshops strengthened police officers' capabilities to discover smuggled drugs and six forensic laboratories were set up in Bulgaria and one in Serbia.



IPA  
contribution:  
EUR  
490 000



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
2 070 000

#### **11 ALP FFIRS – ALPINE FOREST FIRE WARNING SYSTEM** TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME ALPINE SPACE (INTERREG B)

The project aimed to decrease the number of forest fires in the Alps due to climate change. It relied on a shared warning system comprising the analysis of fire frequency and the definition of a univocal danger scale. To enhance forest fire prevention, the project established shared protocols and emergency plans based on weather conditions.



#### **12 FLOOD-WISE** INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG IV C, PROJECT INVOLVING PARTNERS FROM SLOVENIA, NETHERLANDS, BELGIUM, GERMANY, POLAND, HUNGARY AND ROMANIA (INTERREG C)

Floods do not stop at borders. This is why the project supported cross-border flood risk management through close cooperation in six border river basins (Bug, Elbe, Meuse, Ruhr, Somes, Sotla) to enhance the safety of the regions. The project was divided in three phases: flood risk assessment, flood risk mapping and flood risk management plans. Exchange of good practices and sharing of information enabled partners to develop a common vision and strategies to water management.

ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
1 520 000





## GROWTH & JOBS

### 'Fostering socio-economic development of European territories'

The benefit of working together on small initiatives has gradually paved the way for bigger achievements supporting growth and jobs. Interreg has contributed to fostering economic prosperity in Europe by encouraging cooperation in the fields of tourism, innovation and also between small and medium-sized enterprises.



#### 13 PROINCOR – PROACTIVE INNOVATION SUPPORT FOR SMEs IN THE CORRIDOR FROM THE BALTIC TO THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME CENTRAL EUROPE (INTERREG B)

The project aims at supporting the innovation performance of SMEs located between the Baltic and Adriatic seas. 400 free innovation audits were realised by project advisers to show SMEs how to develop systems and make the most of innovation and technological development. 100 managers and employees received direct innovation training.

*'The innovation audit by innovation experts was helpful for our company and our project of wheel motors to develop advanced electric cars.'*

► **GORAZD LAMPIČ** – CEO,  
Elaphe d.o.o., Slovenia

ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
2 440 000



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
2 490 000

#### 14 INNOREG – DEVELOPMENT OF INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODELS FOR ENSURING COMPETITIVENESS CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME CENTRAL BALTIC (INTERREG A)

The project increased the scientific-technical potential of the region via new business models in the field of mechanical engineering. The creation of a technology platform uniting innovation centres, companies and scientific institutions permitted the development of a novel Flexible Manufacturing System. This automated production system can operate 24 hours a day and deliver to extremely high quality requirements.



ERDF  
contribution:  
EUR  
660 000

#### 15 T-CHEESIMAL – NEW TECHNOLOGIES SUPPORTING TRADITIONAL CHEESES IN SICILY AND MALTA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME ITALY-MALTA (INTERREG A)

Applying a combination of rural tradition and innovative technologies to traditional Italian and Maltese dairy products was the key element of this project. Through a transfer of know-how, the research process relied on the administration of 2 500 questionnaires, the hosting of 50 technical scientific meetings, and the creation of a prototype packaging for typical local cheeses to overcome trade isolation obstacles.



# ▶ INTERVIEW

## PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



**Iskra Mihaylova MEP (ALDE), Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (REGI), shares her views on Interreg and how she sees its development in the future.**

### ▶What does European Territorial Cooperation, commonly known as Interreg, mean to you, personally?

Countries and regions tackling common challenges together, sharing good ideas and exchanging experiences. An essential tool in helping to ensure that borders are not barriers, in bringing Europeans closer and developing common solutions. Over the years, Interreg has become the key European instrument to support cooperation between partners across borders and has contributed significantly to cohesion. Interreg has become also a good indicator of stability in the regions.

### ▶What is your ambition for Interreg V (2014-2020)?

The 2014-2020 multi-annual financial framework gives a stronger priority to Interreg, in order to build on the wide experience already acquired all over Europe and to foster new partnerships. We have to make all the benefits and impact of EU funding, including that of Interreg, much more visible. Citizens should know how EU funding helped tackle the crisis and its consequences, and build a more competitive Europe with attractive jobs, environmental benefits and a high standard of living.

The greatest challenge now is to translate the programming documents for 2014-2020 into concrete implementation successes, enhancing growth potential and tackling challenges like migration and demographic issues. The European Parliament will be vigilant to ensure a focus on priorities and projects of real cross-border and transregional relevance in order to achieve the impact needed.

### ▶Have you given any thought yet to what Interreg VI (2020+) should look like?

The REGI Committee intends to elaborate an initiative report based on the development of the European Territorial goal of cohesion that will highlight the 25th anniversary of Interreg, examine how to strengthen the territorial dimension and provide some key directions for post-2020.

The DG Regional and Urban Policy's Evaluation unit – in cooperation with the Member States – is carrying out an *ex post* evaluation of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund 2007-2013 and its 320 co-funded programmes. The EP scrutinises this process and its conclusions will be relevant to feed into the reflection on how the post 2020 cohesion policy programmes should look.

### ▶As a member of the jury for the Interreg 25 #eulove-withoutborders competition, did all these love/border stories inspire you?

The success of love beyond borders impressed and inspired me. It was very difficult to choose the winning couple. Each couple have their unique great story and love, facing obstacles and overcoming them. The competition really showed us that there are no borders when people love each other.

#### ▶FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/interreg25years](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/interreg25years)



# ►NEWS

## [IN BRIEF]



## CYPRUS INAUGURATION EVENT FOR THE 2014-2020 PROGRAMMING PERIOD

In April, **Walter Deffaa**, Director-General for Regional and Urban Policy, took part in the official launch of the Cypriot Operational Programmes – ‘Competitiveness and sustainable development’ (co-financed by ERDF and Cohesion Fund) and ‘Employment, Human resources and Social cohesion’ (co-financed by ESF).

**Nicos Kouyialis**, Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, opened the event and launched the new programmes. **Zoltan Kazatsay**, Deputy Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and **Georges Georghiou**, Director General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development also addressed the event, which attracted a great number of participants and offered a unique opportunity for raising the awareness of citizens and business community about the assistance and the funding opportunities that the ESI Funds provide in Cyprus.

Mr Deffaa also participated in the inauguration ceremony of one of the most emblematic urban projects in Limassol (Multi-functional seaside park – rehabilitation of the historical centre, both amounting to approximately EUR 30 million), with the participation of the President of the Republic **Nikos Anastasiades** and the Mayor **Andreas Christou**.

►FIND OUT MORE  
<http://europa.eu/IHX43fN>

## EU REGIONS AND CITIES ARE GOING LIVE ON **MOOC**

A new learning resource has been designed for people eager to discover more about the important role and impact of EU cities and regions. The free and interactive MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) will feature around two hours a week of educational videos, fact sheets, infographics and weekly web streamed live debates with a focus on EU and regional affairs, across an eight week period, starting on 19 October.

Each week will have a specific theme and content will be provided from 50 politicians and experts from EU institutions, agencies, European associations and academic institutions. Participants are also encouraged to exchange experiences and views via social media through the MOOC’s account – @EU\_MOOC – and course followers who complete 80% of the course will receive a certificate.

The MOOC has been developed in response to a survey in which over 1000 people expressed an interest in learning more about a wide range of EU policies and issues, including: EU institutions; the role of regions and cities; EU cohesion policy and ESI Funds; research, innovation and sustainable development policies; free movement and migration; the EU budget.

EUROPEAN UNION



**Committee of the Regions**

►FIND OUT MORE  
[www.cor.europa.eu/MOOC](http://www.cor.europa.eu/MOOC)

## TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER TOOL IS OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS AND EXPERTS REGISTRATIONS

The new tool, launched by DG Regional and Urban Policy, is easy to use and facilitates short-term exchange of know-how between cohesion policy experts and administrations involved in the management of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund in all Member States. It is part of the Commission's broader effort to help Member States strengthen their administrative capacity, which is one of the priorities of Commissioner for Regional Policy, **Corina Crețu**.

More detailed information about the tool, the application process and modalities for registration of public sector experts is available at: <http://europa.eu/!xT39Xp>

►FOR QUESTIONS, CONTACT:  
[REGIO-PEER2PEER@ec.europa.eu](mailto:REGIO-PEER2PEER@ec.europa.eu)



## FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

More than ever, the various EU funds aim to interact and complement each other. For 2014-2020, the European Social Fund (ESF) amounts to EUR 86 billion and represents more than 23.1 % of total cohesion policy funding, while the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) provides EUR 3.8 billion of co-funding to EU countries. Both funds are managed by the European Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion DG which produces *Social Agenda*, a quarterly magazine in English, German and French.

For regular reports on ESF and FEAD projects and beneficiaries, subscribe for free to *Social Agenda*:

<http://europa.eu/!YM86Rv>

►FIND OUT MORE  
<http://europa.eu/!by74xr>



## FACEBOOK PHOTO COMPETITION

The annual 'Europe in My Region' photo competition, now in its fourth year, takes place this summer and once again aims to raise awareness of projects which have received funding as part of EU regional policy. This year participation in the competition has been extended to countries supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo<sup>(1)</sup>, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.



As before, the competition is run via the European Commission's Facebook page. The competition was launched on 22 June and entries will be accepted until **Friday 28 August 2015** (at 12.00 Central European Summer Time). The 100 pictures with the highest amount of votes, plus up to 50 'wild-card' entries (that were not included in the group with the highest votes), are put forward to a jury of three photography professionals who will select three winning entries. The winners will receive their prize of a trip to Brussels during OPEN DAYS 2015 in October.

### ►FIND OUT MORE

Take a look at last's year entries for inspiration:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/euregional/sets/72157648215374403>

To get more visibility and shares, use the official competition hashtag when sharing your entry on Facebook or Twitter: **#EUmyRegion**

(1) This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



# ► GEARING UP FOR OPEN DAYS 2015

OPEN DAYS 2015 takes place 12-15 October under the main headline 'Europe's regions and cities: partners for investment and growth'. Preparations are well under way, with an OPEN Urban Day, OPEN DAYS University and the RegioStars 2015 Awards all planned alongside the main OPEN DAYS events.

## 3 themes

OPEN DAYS 2015 is structured around three themes, which address challenges and solutions related to the management and implementation of the new EU regional and urban policy programmes, as well as the cross-border, inter-regional or transnational dimension.

### ► 1. MODERNISING EUROPE

#### THE REGIONS IN THE ENERGY UNION AND THE DIGITAL SINGLE MARKET

The new programmes offer important opportunities for growth and jobs in these areas. They can help to make the EU the world number one in renewable energy and energy efficiency and create a vibrant knowledge-based society.

### ► 2. REGIONS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

#### SME DEVELOPMENT, INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION

EU regions have considerable experience of SME promotion and can share best practices in the implementation of SME aid schemes, fostering innovation in SMEs, including links to Smart Specialisation Strategies, and supporting the creation of more micro enterprises.

### ► 3. PLACES AND SPACES

#### URBAN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, URBAN-RURAL INTEGRATION

EU regional and urban programmes can promote more balanced territorial development, rural competitiveness and reduce the rural-urban population drift – as well as tackling the challenges facing border cities and border rural hinterlands.



REGISTRATION  
OPENS  
8 JULY 2015

REGISTRATION  
[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/opendays/od2015/register.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays/od2015/register.cfm)

EVENT DATES  
12-15 OCTOBER



## OPEN URBAN DAY

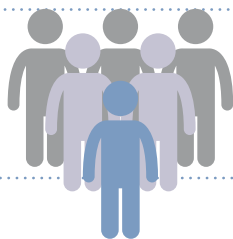
A day of events in the canal area of Brussels will address various urban issues, with workshops planned on the new financial urban instruments, European initiatives like Smart Cities and the Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT and green incubators. Site visits will allow participants to see the revitalisation of the canal area and visit some interesting projects.

### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/opendays/od2015/urban\\_day.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays/od2015/urban_day.cfm)



## OPEN DAYS 2014 AT A GLANCE



► **5 673**  
PARTICIPANTS



► **107**  
WORKSHOPS

► **192**  
CITY AND  
REGIONAL  
PARTNERS



## REGIO STARS 2015

The RegioStars 2015 Awards Ceremony takes place during the official OPEN DAYS reception at BOZAR on Tuesday 13 October. Winning projects will be presented with their trophy by European Commissioner for Regional Policy,

Corina Crețu, and the President of the RegioStars Awards jury, Lambert Van Nistelrooij MEP.

### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/)

## OPEN DAYS UNIVERSITY

The OPEN DAYS University consists of a series of lectures and moderated panel debates which will consider the event's thematic priorities and involve, as appropriate, European academic networks specialised in regional development. As part of this, the Master Class will aim to improve the understanding of EU cohesion policy and its research potential among selected European PhD students and early-career researchers.

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### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/opendays/od2015/od\\_university.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays/od2015/od_university.cfm)

## LOCAL EVENTS

Each participating region and city organises at least one event locally, bringing the message of OPEN DAYS closer to citizens. These will be held between September and November under the heading 'Europe in my region/city', and organised around the OPEN DAYS thematic priorities. They target the general public, potential beneficiaries of EU regional policy, expert audiences, academics and the media and can take various formats such as conferences, workshops, radio/TV broadcasts or exhibitions. Local events can also be organised in conjunction with the launch of EU regional policy projects or in the framework of annual information measures as required by the ESI Funds regulations.

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### ► FIND OUT MORE

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/opendays/od2015/local\\_events.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/opendays/od2015/local_events.cfm)

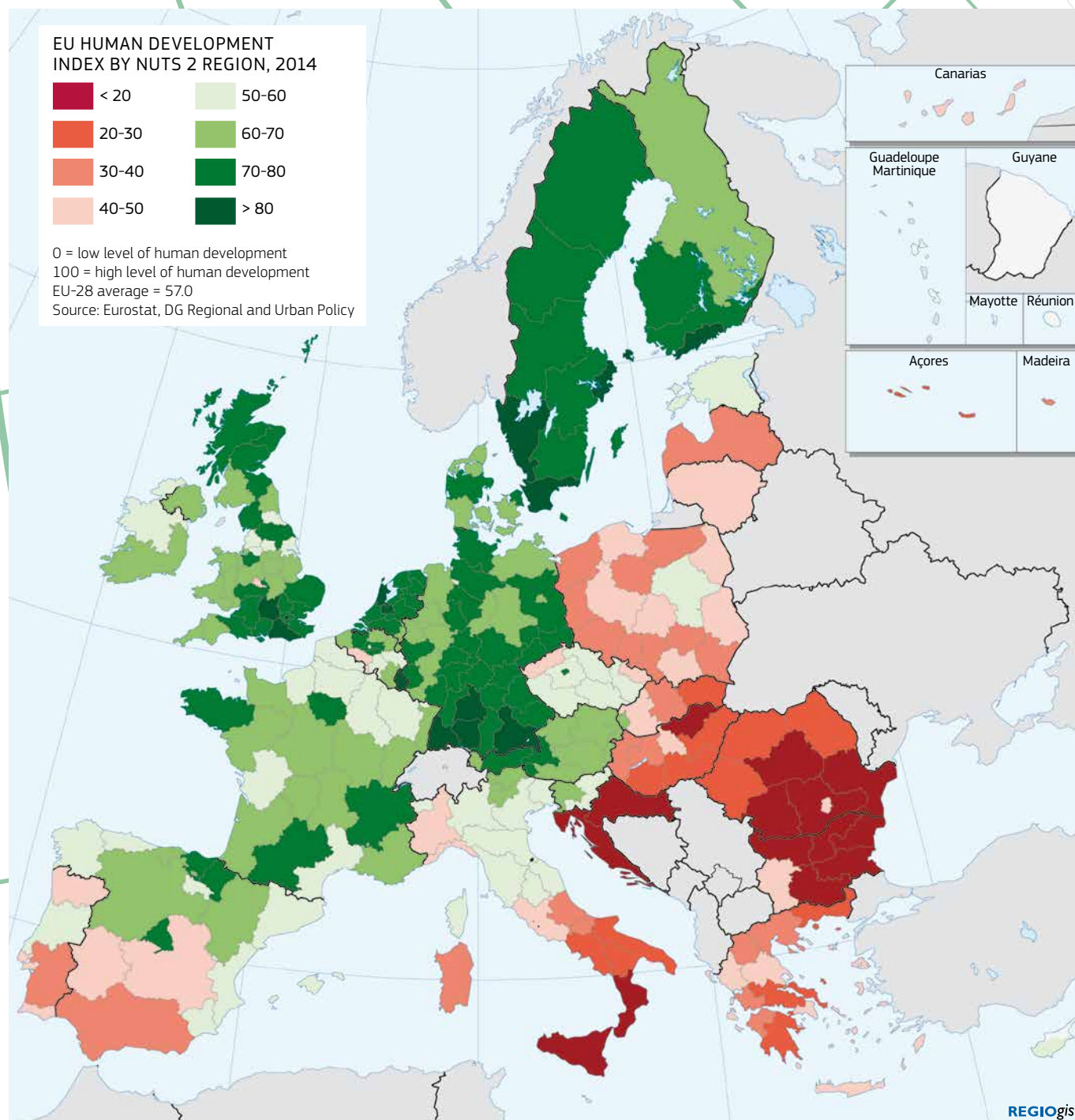


### ► FIND OUT MORE

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



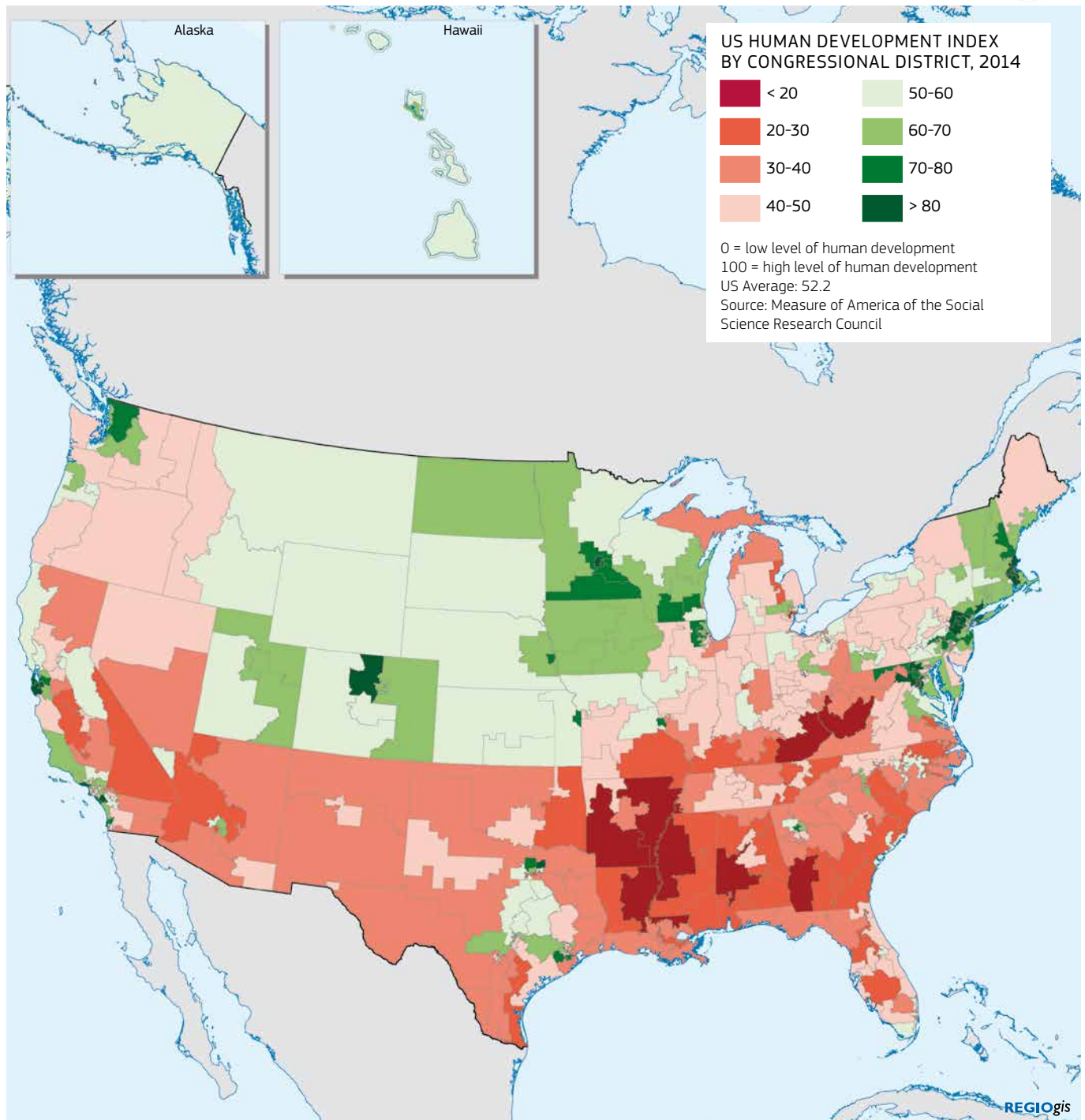
# ► EU HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2014



**The Human Development Index (HDI) was specifically developed to compare the 435 US congressional districts to the EU NUTS 2 regions.** It captures health, income and education based on six indicators: the USA has a higher disposable household income and employment rate; the EU has a higher healthy life expectancy and a lower infant

mortality; and the two have similar scores on the tertiary education and the 'not in employment, education or training' rate. Overall, the index for the EU is higher than that of the USA, as the better health performance compensated the lower income performance.

# ▶ US HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX 2014



The highest HDI was found in a US congressional district that covers parts of New York City. The second highest was Stockholm. These are followed by three congressional districts in the San Francisco Bay area, two outside Washington DC, one outside Boston, one more in New York City and two in Northern New Jersey. The next is Utrecht in the Netherlands.

The lowest ten HDIs were found in two Bulgarian and three Romanian NUTS 2 regions and five congressional districts in Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana, Georgia and Michigan (Detroit). A *Regional Focus* to be published by DG Regional and Urban Policy later this year will describe the results in more detail.



# ► SMART SPECIALISATION PLATFORM ON ENERGY LAUNCHED



► CORNWALL & ISLES OF SCILLY, UK

The Wave Hub project is developing the world's largest test site for devices generating electricity from the wave energy of the sea.

**EU cohesion policy will provide significant support for the realisation of an integrated European Energy Union over the 2014-2020 period, in particular through EUR 38 billion for low-carbon investments. In addition, more than 100 EU regions and Member States have chosen energy as a priority in their national or regional smart specialisation strategies. To support the take-up of these funds a dedicated support system – a Smart Specialisation Platform on Energy – has been set up by the Commission.**

The European Smart Specialisation Platform on Energy is an initiative of the European Commission Directorates-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Energy and the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), and was launched in Brussels in May 2015. It has been developed to provide support to Member States and regions to enable them to access and implement cohesion policy funding more successfully for their sustainable energy projects.

## Cohesion policy supports energy and low-carbon

Member States have allocated, for 2014-2020, EUR 38 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund to low-carbon economy investments. This represents more than a doubling of funding in this area compared to the 2007-2013 period and is significantly more – approaching almost 50% more – than the legally required amount which shows the great importance that Member States attach to investments in this area.

Member States have prioritised investments in:

- energy efficiency for public buildings, for housing and for enterprises, in particular SMEs;
- renewable energy production and its distribution, e.g. for wind, biomass and solar energy, as well as their electric connection to the grids, if needed;
- smart distribution grids to allow for active management of the electricity flows based on the demand and supply;
- sustainable multimodal urban mobility to make our cities better place to live and less carbon intensive, e.g. various integrated measures to facilitate the switch away from private cars in the cities to walking, cycling, using trams or buses;
- research and innovation in these areas.

In addition, some EUR 2 billion are allocated to investments in smart energy infrastructure, which will be the backbone of the future decarbonised power system.

## Sharing expertise and increasing the take-up

The Platform will help regions to share their expertise on sustainable energy investments and the deployment of innovative low-carbon technologies. It brings together scientific expertise, innovative networking tools and policy development expertise, and will help regions to access information and to exchange ideas and best practices – generating new expertise and turning them into building blocks of the Energy Union.

In particular this platform will support regions and Member States in the following ways:

- in analysing investment priorities and needs of the regions in the field of sustainable energy and smart specialisation;



**Total investment:**  
EUR 40 500 000  
**ERDF:**  
EUR 22 600 000



**► THE RUHR INNOVATIONCITY – MODELLSTADT BOTTRUP**

This project aims to transform an entire city district through innovative energy efficiency measures, targeting a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> consumption by 50% by 2020, while simultaneously improving the quality of life. Four projects related to heat-power-co-generation and energy consumption mapping have been supported by the ERDF.

**Total investment:**  
EUR 5 400 000  
**ERDF:**  
EUR 2 700 000

**“I welcome the new Platform on Energy which will pool joint know-how on sustainable energy and will help regions in making efficient use of the funding available to invest in innovative solutions.”**

► **CORINA CREȚU – EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR REGIONAL POLICY**

- popularising and explaining what are the existing opportunities for cohesion policy funding and providing advice of how these could be best used;
- identifying good practices and bringing about a better take-up of cohesion policy funds by Member States and regions in launching cooperation actions to accelerate the development and deployment of energy technologies.

## EU Energy Union strategy

By supporting the optimal use of cohesion policy funds for sustainable energy projects, the Platform will directly contribute to the EU Energy Union strategy – ‘A Framework Strategy for a Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy’, which was launched in February 2015. It will promote the shift towards a low-carbon economy, including by supporting sustainable energy. It will also promote the adoption of efficient technologies and processes by SMEs, the construction of smart energy infrastructure, and the development of ICT applications in the field of energy.

European Commissioner for Regional Policy **Corina Crețu** commented: ‘For 2014-2020, more than EUR 38 billion of cohesion policy funding will be invested in achieving the Energy Union strategy and boosting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors... That is why I welcome the new Platform on Energy which will pool joint know-how on sustainable energy and will help regions in making efficient use of the funding available to invest in innovative solutions.’

## Smart Specialisation Platform

Smart specialisation is an innovative approach developed by the European Commission in close cooperation with industry and research to foster economic growth and prosperity at the regional level. It encourages the efficient and targeted use of public investment in research and innovation to create competitive advantages and enable regions to specialise in their field (or fields) of relative strength.

The work of the new Platform on Energy will build on the fruitful cooperation between DG Regional and Urban Policy and the JRC on the Smart Specialisation Platform focused on research and innovation strategies – the ‘S3 Platform’ – which dates back to 2009. The activity of this Platform has involved over 80% of EU Member States or regions. More than two-thirds of these have chosen energy as their area of smart specialisation.

**► FIND OUT MORE**

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/s3p-energy>



BELGIUM

Total cost:  
EUR 4 620 000  
EU contribution:  
EUR 2 310 000

# ▶ REHABILITATION OF POLLUTED LAND CREATES JOBS AND NEW BUSINESS

**Heavily polluted former industrial sites around Brussels are being cleaned up and transformed into job-creating business locations under the Brussels Greenfields programme.**

Many plots of land along the Brussels-Charleroi Canal have been contaminated over the last decades by highly polluting industrial activities. Those responsible for this pollution are often unknown, bankrupt or otherwise unable to clean up the contaminated land which is left unusable.

The Brussels Greenfields project, launched in 2009 with support of the Brussels-Capital Region and the ERDF, has been stimulating the clean-up of the polluted sites and the introduction of business projects to revitalise the area and create economic activity and jobs. In return for locating to these areas, the successful project sponsors receive subsidies for depolluting the land as well as integrated business support.

## Canadian inspiration

The philosophy of Brussels Greenfields was inspired by the ReviSols programme in Quebec, Canada, where the authorities developed a policy for the rehabilitation of well situated land contaminated by past industrial activity, taking on part of the costs for the clean-up to stimulate reinvestment projects in the targeted areas.

Confronted with a similar problem, the Brussels region commissioned a feasibility study for such a programme on its own territory, resulting in the Brussels Greenfields programme – implemented by the organisation Brussels Environment-IBGE.

Under the programme, organisations are invited to relocate to the area to set up businesses (housing projects are excluded) on the condition that they create economic activity and jobs. In exchange, the project sponsors receive a variable rate subsidy for planning costs and clean-up expenses and business advisory services.

Brussels Greenfields has so far supported 12 projects creating approximately 2 200 (direct and indirect) jobs. The winners include a promising array of eco-friendly projects and social economy ventures that combine sustainable operations with a focus on economic and social renewal.

These projects include an enterprise park for SMEs (Paepsem) which took over a site polluted by chlorinated solvents and heavy metals. A 6 000 m<sup>2</sup> building with modular workshops is being built for SMEs and should bring 200 jobs.

A cooling and storage facility is being built for 40 food wholesalers (Mabru) replacing a former gas works and creating 100 new jobs. Other initiatives include the 'Ecopôle' recycling centre, an urban kitchen garden with plots for amateurs and small commercial operators, while 'Brussels Greenbizz' is developing a business incubator for environmental companies and production studios, and 500 affordable passive housing units.

## ▶ FIND OUT MORE

[www.enviroennement.brussels/thematiques/sols/primaires-et-fonds/brussels-greenfields](http://www.enviroennement.brussels/thematiques/sols/primaires-et-fonds/brussels-greenfields)



**Total cost:**  
EUR 20 800 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 6 450 000

►FRANCE

# ►PICARDIE PROMOTES RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**France's region of Picardie is exploiting its aerospace expertise through an innovative research and training centre.**

Through its connection with Airbus Industries, the region of Picardie has become a specialist aerospace hub and has set out to exploit this expertise through the innovative IndustriLAB project.

IndustriLAB is a training, research and technology transfer centre, whose activity is centred on four strategic business fields: innovative product engineering; high industrial performance; robotics of the future; and new industrial practices.

It is targeted at companies of all sizes and all industries which can come and develop their projects and train their employees. It also services technical centres and universities wishing to undertake research projects.

IndustriLAB grew out of the need to develop advanced composite materials and robotic assembly technology for future Airbus aircraft and was set up next to the Aerolia aerospace factory in Méaulte (a subsidiary of EADS and sister company of Airbus) as a technology transfer centre.

The site covers 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>, with 3 000 m<sup>2</sup> of industrial halls, 600 m<sup>2</sup> of modular workshops, 1 200 m<sup>2</sup> of offices with broadband, meeting rooms and a 120-seat amphitheatre. A third of the site is occupied by Aerolia which undertakes specialist R&D work in the fields of robotics and composite materials.

IndustriLAB is both a facility and a network of expertise which brings together training centres, laboratories,

technical/research centres, technology transfer specialists, financial organisations, institutions and industrial partners (Aerolia, EADS, etc.).

The Picardie region sees IndustriLAB as an opportunity to further regional economic development which, through research and innovation, can help expand the regional aviation sector that already provides 5% of the whole workforce. It also aims to encompass other strategic industrial sectors such as automotive and rail.

IndustriLAB also has an impact beyond the Picardie region, particularly towards neighbouring Nord-Pas de Calais, where the railway and automobile sectors are prominent.

Launched in 2009 and co-funded under the 2007-2013 ERDF programme, the IndustriLAB project is fully in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and showcases the high level of technological expertise in the region.

Since 2010, 25 collaborative innovation projects have been supported by the Picardie region and European funds. These involve companies, research laboratories and regional technical centres, which strengthen the competitiveness of regional industry and the influence of Picardie's university research.

►FIND OUT MORE  
[www.industrilab.fr](http://www.industrilab.fr)



**Total cost:**  
EUR 432 000 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 208 000 000

POLAND/LITHUANIA

# ▶ ENERGY BRIDGE HELPS BALTIC ENERGY SECURITY

**New electricity lines and transmission stations are being built to link the grids of Poland and Lithuania, an investment that will help to strengthen the energy independence of the two countries and the energy security of the Baltic countries.**

Within the project, the Transmission System Operator (TSO) in Poland, PSE S.A, is making 11 line and station investments, co-funded through the ERDF (through the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment, managed by the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure and Development), including diversification of energy sources.

While creating the interconnection with the Lithuanian transmission system, the project is also reinforcing the electricity grid in North-Eastern Poland and improving the quality and reliability of supply of electricity to consumers.

The two countries set out to reduce the degree of energy dependence by diversifying the routes, sources and energy carriers, and reducing the regions' isolation from the rest of the EU. In 2008 a Polish-Lithuanian company, LitPol Link Ltd., was established to support the initial phase of the project and coordinate the project in both countries. The strategic importance of this project was recognised by the European Commission and it was granted EUR 208 million (PLN 868 million) towards the total cost of EUR 432 million (PLN 1 800 million), as well as an additional EUR 1.9 million for feasibility studies from the TEN-E fund.

In Poland, the first construction works began in 2012 and the line and station investments are due to be completed by the end of 2015. The connection will enable Poland to develop interconnections with neighbouring countries, while Lithuania, as well as other Baltic states, will be capable of joining the European energy system (Continental European Network) via back-to-back stations.

Creating a Poland-Lithuania interconnection (LitPol Link) – the first between the two countries – is a crucial element in developing a common European energy market by creating the so-called 'Baltic ring' to connect the markets of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the European electricity network via Poland. It will also increase the transmission capacity of the Baltic states.

The construction of power bridges in the Baltic region also contributes to the development of trans-European energy networks. The investment is part of the European Commission's Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan, adopted in July 2009, whose main goal is to end the isolation of the Baltic states from the European energy market.

On 20 April 2015 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed relating to common power trading principles for the LitPol Link and brings Polish-Lithuanian power trading a step closer.

#### ▶ FIND OUT MORE

[www.pse.pl](http://www.pse.pl)

[www.polaczeniepolskalitwa.pl/](http://www.polaczeniepolskalitwa.pl/)

## UNITED KINGDOM

## ▶ BRINGING HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND TO WALES

**Households and businesses across Wales are being connected to high-speed fibre broadband putting them at the forefront of the digital revolution.**

More than 437 000 premises can now access superfast broadband thanks to the roll out of the Superfast Cymru programme, with over one million premises able to access it when combined with the commercial roll out. Superfast Cymru is a partnership funded by the Welsh Government, UK Government, UK telecoms operator BT (British Telecommunications plc) and the EU to deliver superfast broadband across Wales. The project is a huge undertaking and involves BT engineers installing more than 17 500 km of fibre cable and installing around 3 000 roadside green cabinets. This is often done in difficult and challenging conditions.

Access to high-speed and secure communications is seen as vital for the future economic prosperity of the country. Before getting this digital infrastructure to all corners of

Wales, local businesses faced a big challenge when competing with companies in other parts of the UK. Now some 130 000 businesses in Cardiff, 90 000 in Swansea and 50 000 in both Newport and Wrexham have high-speed internet communications. Coverage in Wales is today ahead of other EU countries such as France, Spain and Italy and on a par with Germany. 'Fast fibre broadband benefits homes and businesses and will ensure that Wales is at the forefront of the digital revolution', said First Minister of Wales, **Carwyn Jones**. 'It's a great example of the success that can be achieved when private and public sectors work together to deliver projects that will change homes and businesses across the length and breadth of Wales.'

Through the project BT has created 250 full time engineering jobs in Wales during the last two years. The company has also recruited more than 110 apprentices and many computer science graduates from across Wales.

'This is a tremendous achievement and shows the impact Superfast Cymru is having along with the commercial roll out,' Carwyn Jones added. 'Superfast Cymru is an ambitious and challenging programme, which is bringing fast fibre broadband to communities across Wales which would not otherwise receive it.'

The project is being delivered using a mix of Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) and Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) solutions. In order to ensure customer choice and competition, the network's wholesale open access services are being offered to third party retail service providers on a non-discriminatory basis. This is an obligation which will be maintained for a minimum of seven years.

**David Hughes**, Head of the European Commission Office in Wales, said: 'Superfast Cymru is a perfect example of how European regional funds can help Europe's recovery and directly contribute to creating jobs and growth. Providing fast and reliable access to the internet plays a vital role in supporting regional economic development.'

▶ **FIND OUT MORE**  
[www.superfast-cymru.com](http://www.superfast-cymru.com)



**Total cost:**  
EUR 210 910 000  
**EU contribution:**  
EUR 100 000 000

## ► AGENDA 2015

### 15-16 SEPTEMBER

\_Luxembourg (LU)

25 years of European  
Territorial Cooperation

### 12-15 OCTOBER

\_Brussels (BE)

OPEN DAYS: 13th  
European Week of Regions  
and Cities

### 13 OCTOBER

\_Brussels (BE)

RegioStars Ceremony

### 29-30 OCTOBER

\_Ulm, Baden-Württemberg (DE)

4th Annual Forum of  
the EU Strategy for  
the Danube Region

More information on these events can be found  
in the Agenda section of the Inforegio website:

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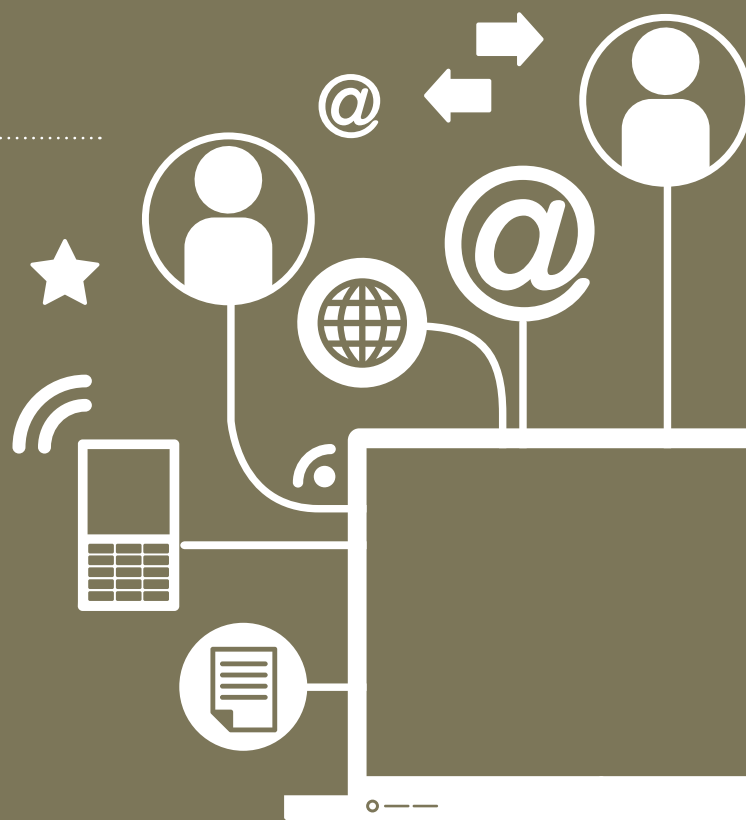


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