

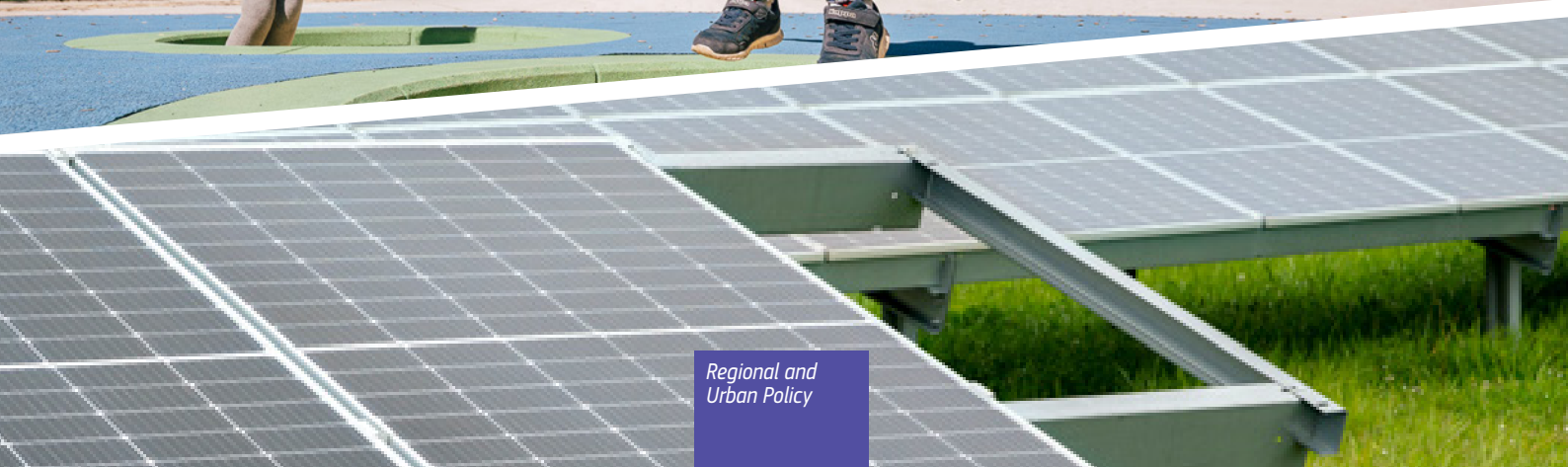


European
Commission



BRIDGING GAPS: EU Cohesion Policy

Creating a better life
for Europeans



Regional and
Urban Policy

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Bridging Gaps: EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

Creating a better life for Europeans

The European Union's Cohesion Policy is vital in reducing economic and social disparities and promoting harmonious development across the continent. The policy, implemented together with the EU countries and regions, gives active, timely support for employment, entrepreneurship, research & development, infrastructure, environment, human capital and much more in line with objectives of smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The title of the publication, Bridging Gaps, refers to exactly that: it is through Cohesion Policy that regions can address their needs and capitalise their advantages for everyone's benefit.

In 2014-2020, the EU invested €405 billion into European economies and societies (an estimated total of €551 billion with national contributions) through Cohesion Policy. While Cohesion Policy is delivered through three funds: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), and Cohesion Fund (CF), this publication focuses mainly on the results enabled by the ERDF and CF, as well as the instruments that are deployed through these funds.

Previous programming periods of Cohesion Policy set the course for the EU's growth strategy. The 2007-2013 interval prioritised job creation, entrepreneurship support and modernising transport and production. 2014-2020 builds on this solid foundation and took it a step further, boosting the low-carbon economy, reducing unemployment and fostering social inclusion.

As ever more Europeans live in cities, 'urban' has become crucial for EU's future. On the other side of the same coin, development of rural areas is no less relevant. Due to the interlinked nature of urban questions, as well as of urban and non-urban areas, the 2014-2020 period saw the uptake of new place-based policy tools that empower

regions to utilise different funds for a consistent development. In addition, the EU's outermost regions, home to nearly 5 million people, benefit from targeted strategies and investments.

Similarly, the financial instruments (FI) provide ERDF support where the financial markets do not. It is through loans, guarantees and equity, for example, that over 600 000 European small and medium sized enterprises could build their business for the long term, thus contributing to the achievements of Cohesion Policy objectives.

“In 2014-2020, the EU invested €405 billion into European economies and societies (an estimated total of €551 billion with national contributions) through Cohesion Policy.”

The policy's Interreg programmes support collaborative projects by regions and cities in different countries to find solutions to common challenges and make most of the opportunities. Notably in the border regions, where 37.5% of EU citizens live, the cross-border projects have tangible impact on issues such as employment opportunities, access to health care, and education. Such cooperation is furthermore facilitated through EU macro-regional strategies.

The EU's Solidarity Fund helps countries to recover, notably from natural disasters such as earthquakes in Croatia and Italy, forest fires in Portugal, floods in Germany, Belgium and Romania, and cyclones in Greece.

The end of 2014-2020 period was defined by crises. First, in early 2020, Europe together with the whole world was faced with a pandemic, challenging not only the health-care sector, but also local businesses, employment, and education. In 2022, Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, brought to the forefront the very existence of the EU as means for peace. The EU's crisis instruments offered essential support in the wake of the crisis (for instance buying ventilators and vaccines), as well as helping the EU to recover in the long term (support to businesses). Plus, a modification of the Cohesion Policy rules (CARE- Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe) supported Members States and regions in providing emergency assistance to Ukrainian refugees.

This publication offers a deep dive into the policy, its objectives, and most importantly the results of the 2014–2020 funding period. While there are thousands of local projects worth showcasing, the pages of this publication highlight a limited number of them in the hope these will convey the essence of the impact achieved over the years – regionally, nationally and Europe wide.

To discover all the Cohesion Policy projects in your region – or in the topic you are interested in, visit [Kohesio](#). Find common indicators and stories at [Cohesion Open Data Platform](#). Information on EU's regional policy can be found on [Inforegio](#).

Delivery of Cohesion Policy in 2014–2020

Cohesion Policy is the EU's main investment tool. The 2014–2020 Cohesion Policy guided the spending of nearly one third of the EU budget through three funds: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund. It is implemented under the principle of “shared management,” which means that the Member States and regions play an important role in ensuring that the funding is targeted at areas that are meaningful for the region's – and thus Europe's – sustainable development.

Overview of funds and respective budgets

Total EU investment: **€405 billion**

Total investment: **€551 billion** (estimated)

**Allocations per Member State are indicated in the country pages. These amounts exclude the European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) allocation as this is presented as a lump sum in the dedicated Interreg page.*

- **European Regional Development Fund**

The European Regional Development Fund covers all Member States and invests under all thematic objectives. It has a strong focus on four key priority areas: research & innovation, digital economy, SME competitiveness, and low carbon economy.

EU Investment: **€230 billion**

- **Cohesion Fund**

The Cohesion Fund is aimed at Member States whose gross national income per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. The focus is on trans-European transport networks, and the environment, notably sustainable energy production.

During the 2014–2020 period, 15 Member States benefitted from the Cohesion Fund. These are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

EU Investment: **€61 billion**

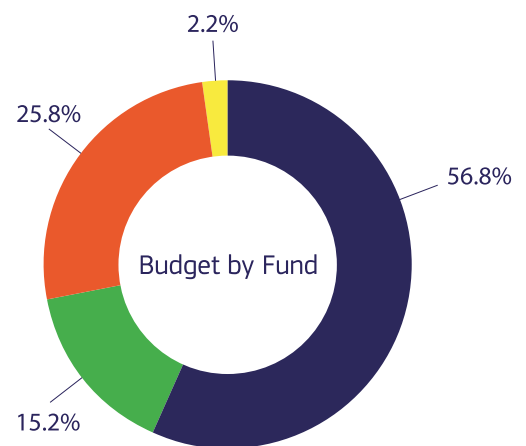
- **European Social Fund**

The European Social Fund is Europe's main instrument for investing in people. It helps people find employment or create businesses. The fund supports disadvantaged groups, improves education, and makes public services more efficient.

EU Investment: **€113 billion**

**The ESF allocations presented throughout the publication include the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)*

Budget share per fund



11 Thematic Objectives

At the European level, 11 thematic objectives were set for the funding periods. These objectives reflect the common vision on key issues for Europe's sustainable future and reduction of economic and social disparities between regions - Europe's cohesion.

1. Strengthen research, technological development, and innovation
2. Improve access to, and the use and quality of, information and communication technologies
3. Enhance the competitiveness of SMEs
4. Support the shift towards a low-carbon economy
5. Promote climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Reserve and protect the environment, and promote resource efficiency
7. Promote sustainable transport and improve network infrastructures
8. Promote sustainable and quality employment and support labour mobility
9. Promote social inclusion, combat poverty and any discrimination
10. Invest in education, training, and lifelong learning
11. Improve the efficiency of public administration

Over-arching achievements

Cohesion Policy's achievements are the most tangible there, where a given project was carried out, and the most meaningful to that person, family, or business, who directly benefits from the investment. However, some – but by no means all – overarching achievements can be highlighted based on the common indicators used by the Member States and regions. In this chapter we look at those, through themes that are to become familiar also on the country specific pages of this publication. The achievements here refer to the achievements of the national and regional programmes.



Enterprise support

SMEs are the backbone of the European economy. However, due to their small size, SMEs face particular challenges. Enterprises, notably small and medium sized enterprises, benefitted from the funding to make necessary investments, for example in new products and services, establishing e-commerce, and improving energy efficiency. A meaningful number of SMEs were also supported through support services, incubators, and clusters, and infrastructures like science technology parks or centres, and innovation hubs.

- 2.36 million enterprises received support from ERDF
- Nearly 370 000 new jobs were created as a result of support to enterprises
- Almost 230 000 new enterprises were created
- Over 84 000 enterprises developed new-to-market or new-to-firm products or services

Examples of SME support projects highlighted in this publication include Techtower in Czechia, the Local Enterprise Office in Ireland, and Thor Park in Belgium.





Research

In building up sustainable growth, research is a key to unlock the region's capacity to innovate. Therefore, Cohesion Policy funded investments to upgrade research infrastructure and facilities, applied research and uptake of new technologies, as well as collaboration between SMEs and research institutes.

- 72 000 researchers with improved infrastructure
- 20 000 new research positions created

Examples of research projects highlighted in this publication include the Biosafety lab in Germany, PrintoFood project in Finland, Synchrotron ALBA in Spain, and VEGA supercomputer in Slovenia.

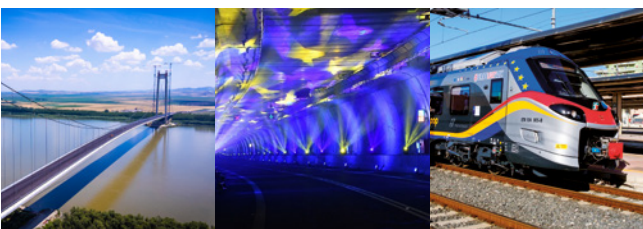


Transport

Investments in transport services and infrastructure benefit citizens and businesses. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key transport infrastructures was achieved by investing in the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high-quality and interoperable railway systems for example. Also, funding was made available for seaports, airports, and inland waterways.

- Nearly 12 000 km of new and reconstructed roads
- 2 100 km of constructed and reconstructed railway lines

Examples of transport projects highlighted in this publication include Braila Bridge in Romania, Świnoujście Tunnel in Poland, and POP trains in Italy.



Urban mobility

The policy also promoted clean urban mobility, thus concretely improving transportation infrastructure in cities. Investments improved and expanded tram lines, metro lines, walking and cycling paths, and multimodal traffic solutions. Safety remained a priority in these developments.

- 257 km of new or improved metro or tram lines completed

Examples of urban mobility projects highlighted in this publication include the Smart Solar Charging project in the Netherlands, electric suburban passenger trains in Latvia, and the fossil free Skåne project in Sweden.

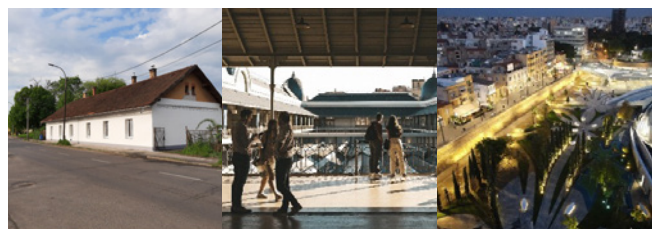


Sustainable urban development

Urban areas are home to two third of the EU's population and engines of the European economy. While these areas are places of many opportunities, they are also places where persistent problems, such as unemployment, segregation, and poverty are at their most severe. Consequently, the investments supported holistic responses in a variety of areas to improve the livelihood and wellbeing of locals.

- 20 million square metres of open space were created or rehabilitated
- 1.7 million square metres of buildings were constructed or renovated in urban areas

Examples of urban development projects highlighted in this publication include the Miskolc complex urban social rehabilitation programme in Hungary, the renovation of Mercado do Bolhão in Portugal, and Eleftheria Square regeneration in Cyprus.





Low carbon economy

Cohesion Policy plays an important role in supporting the EU's transition to a low-carbon economy. For the 2014-2020 funding period, the Member States were for the first time required to allocate a minimum proportion of the available funding to the low-carbon economy. Investments included energy efficiency in buildings, renewable energy, smart distribution electricity grids or sustainable urban transport and research and innovation in these areas.

- 6 000 MW renewable energy capacity created
- 3 500 000 000 kWh saved per year in public buildings
- Half a million households improved energy efficiency

The investments effected a yearly reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG). This was due to a combination of increased renewable energy production and decreased energy consumption through energy-saving measures.

- 9.5 million tonnes of CO₂e (equivalent) of GHG emissions decreased annually

Examples of energy projects highlighted in this publication include the installation of solar power plants in households in Lithuania, an energy positive Technical High School in Luxembourg, a rotation heat pump for a cleantech start-up in Austria, and eight business lighthouses in Denmark.



Waste management & circular economy

Improved waste management is an important component of socio-economic development. Investments in waste and wastewater management address not only health and environmental concerns, but also contribute to the circular economy. Investments include construction or upgrading of waste treatment infrastructure, wastewater treatment plants and sewerage networks, and sewage sludge management.

- Over 9 million people got access to completed wastewater treatment systems
- 3.4 million tonnes of increased waste recycling capacity per year across Europe

Examples of waste management projects highlighted in this publication include a multi-material recovery facility in Malta, construction of anaerobic installation for source-separated organic waste in Bulgaria, and the Regi Lagni wastewater treatment system in Italy.



Protecting biodiversity & Climate change adaptation

Protection of nature and biodiversity is ever more important. Cohesion Policy investments support the EU's nature and biodiversity policies, for instance by strengthening the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. At the same time, most regions have to adapt to climate change. Investments to this end cover prevention of adverse consequences of disasters and regions' preparedness for when disasters strike.

- 3.4 million hectares of habitats conserved
- Over 3 000 hectares of rehabilitated land
- 17.3 million people are benefitting from supported flood protection measures
- 15 million persons benefit from improved forest fire protection

Examples of protection of biodiversity and climate change adaptation projects highlighted in this publication include the restoration of habitats in the Pärnu river system in Estonia, the ARIEM+ emergency response Interreg project, and the Metmonic project in Croatia.





Tourism

Europe is the most visited region in the world, and tourism's contribution to the economy and employment is not insignificant. Investments that aim at supporting tourism relate to development of tourism products and natural and cultural heritage, and promotion. The sector's revenue and employment were among the most severely affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Nearly 33 million new tourism visits per year in national and regional programmes

Examples of tourism projects highlighted in this publication include the Interreg projects Tatras cycling route and Becharac & Ganga cultural route, and the Archaeological Museum of Chania, in Greece.

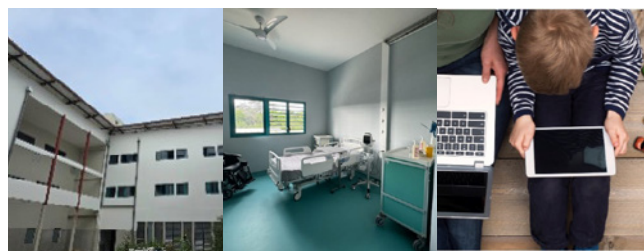


Social infrastructure

The complementarity of the ESF and ERDF under the Cohesion Policy is notable under the social infrastructure heading. While ESF supports employability, job search capabilities, education at all levels, inclusion, healthcare, long-term care and community services, the ERDF invests in building and improving infrastructure and equipment to meet the infrastructural needs to make these services available.

- 63 million people benefited from improved health service facilities
- nearly 24.6 million children and young people had benefited from the childcare facilities and education infrastructure that have been built.

Examples of social infrastructure projects highlighted in this publication include healthcare establishment in French Guiana, Tartu Childrens Hospital in Estonia, and the provision of digital school equipment to Ukrainian pupils in Slovakia.



| Results 2014-2020





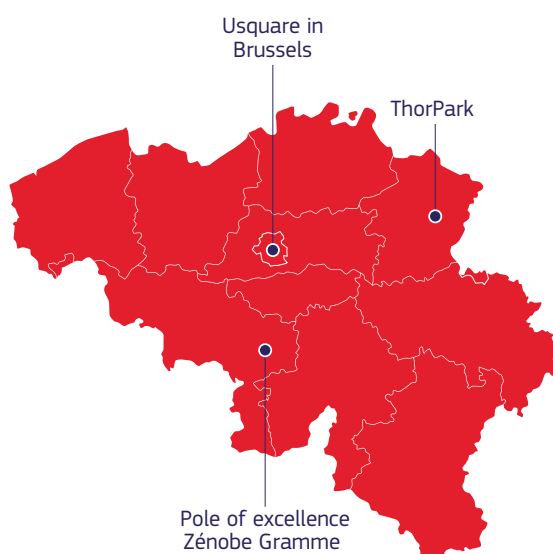
Belgium implemented programmes in three regions: Brussels Capital Region, Flanders, and Wallonia. Through targeted EU funding, emphasis was placed on research and innovation, enhancing SME competitiveness, and fostering a low-carbon economy, all aligned with the unique strengths and developmental needs of each region.

European Regional Development Fund

€1.08 billion

European Social Fund

€1.26 billion



Key Achievements



CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

- Stronger links between higher education and technology and research centres.
- Facilitation of innovation ecosystems to drive economic growth.



INDUSTRIAL REDEVELOPMENT

- Transformation of disused industrial land and sites into vibrant hubs.
- Conversion of former industrial areas into modern, sustainable spaces for innovation and commerce.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY INITIATIVES

- Enhanced energy efficiency in public and commercial buildings.
- Construction or renovation of urban infrastructure with a focus on sustainability.



INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENT

- Improved public infrastructure to bolster connectivity and accessibility.
- Revitalisation of businesses and micro-enterprises through access to cutting-edge technologies.



STARTUP SUPPORT

- Provision of vital support to startups, fostering competitiveness and driving innovation.
- Empowerment of entrepreneurial ventures to thrive in dynamic market landscapes.



REDUCTION OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION

- Decrease in the primary energy consumption of public buildings.
- Sustainable practices to achieve significant energy savings.

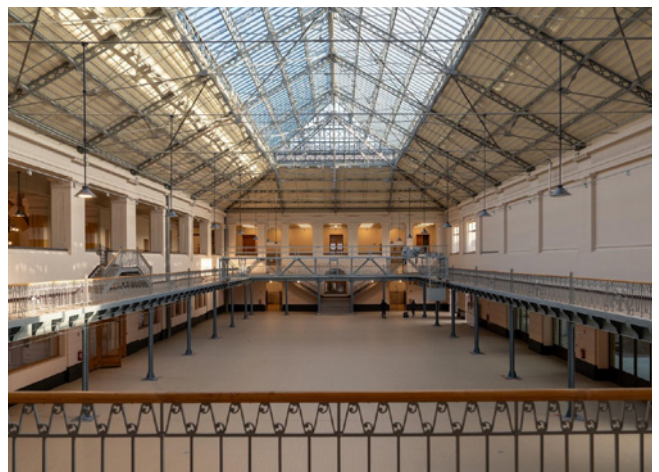
Usquare Revitalises a Brussels Quartier

Brussels witnessed a historic transformation as the [Usquare project](#) breathes new life into a century-old military complex. The initiative envisions a vibrant urban space seamlessly blending past and future. Usquare.brussels has created a dynamic fusion of modern living, learning, and creative endeavours, all underpinned by principles of circular economy and energy efficiency.



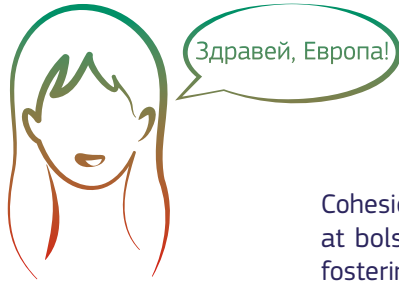
Zénobe Gramme Building in Charleroi Transformed

Charleroi's architectural heritage takes centre stage with the ambitious [Pole of Excellence Zénobe Gramme](#) project. The initiative has revitalised the iconic Zénobe Gramme building. Striving for energy efficiency and regulatory compliance, the project has established a distinguished centre of excellence for lifelong learning, higher education, and cutting-edge scientific research.



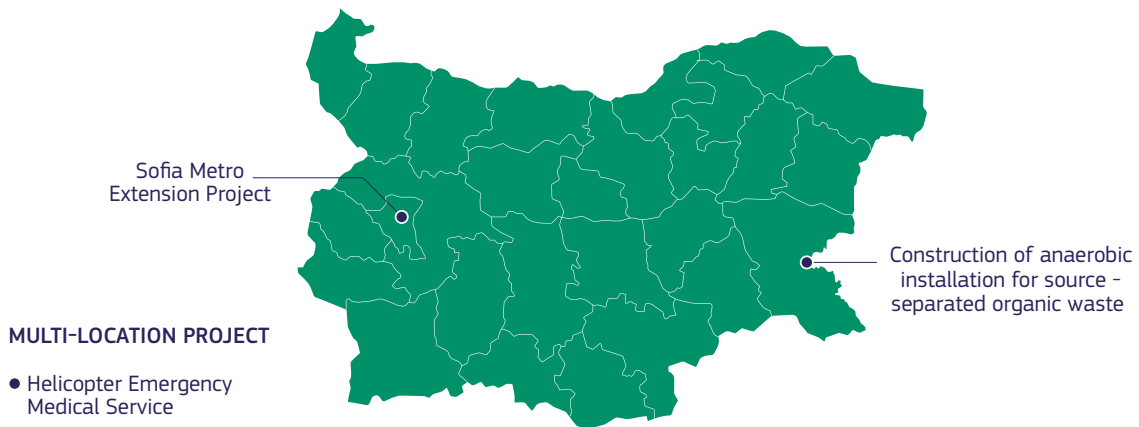
ThorPark Leads Limburg's Sustainable Renaissance

Genk heralds a new era of sustainability and innovation with the [ThorPark](#) redevelopment project. The initiative marks a bold reinvention of a once-thriving mining site. At the heart of ThorPark lies a commitment to sustainable energy solutions and cutting-edge services for businesses. With flagship projects like [Energyville](#), [T2 Campus](#), [Smart Manufacturing Campus](#), and [THOREAQ](#) the park emerges as a dynamic hub of progress.



Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria is delivered through thematic programmes aimed at bolstering environmental protection, enhancing resource efficiency, and fostering growth across various sectors. These programmes target vital areas such as transportation and energy infrastructure, support for SMEs, promotion of a low-carbon economy, and investment in research, education, and training.

Cohesion Fund	€2.2 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€3.8 billion
European Social Fund	€1.85 billion



Key Achievements



SUPPORT FOR SMES

- Financial assistance provided to over 40 000 enterprises.
- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Initiative created nearly 15 000 jobs.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Strengthened resilience against natural disasters and climate change.
- Over 1.65 million people benefitting from improved flood protection.



CARE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Urgent support provided to Ukrainian refugees.
- Funding for accommodation and food for over 64 000 refugees in just two months.



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Construction and renovation of 560 km roads.
- 13.1 km of newly built or modernised tram and metro lines and the addition of 13 new metro stations.



EDUCATION ACCESS

- 197 740 people benefit from renovated childcare and educational facilities.
- Access to quality inclusive education improved, particularly for disadvantaged children.



SAFE AFFORDABLE ENERGY SUPPORT

- Proactive measures to address surging electric energy prices.
- Support to over 100 000 SMEs and 320 000 vulnerable households.

Sofia Metro Expansion

Sofia Metro Extension Project: Line 3 stages I and II marks a transformative leap in urban transportation. With a total investment of €406 million, it extends Sofia's metro network, enhancing efficiency and safety whilst serving up to 50 000 passengers per hour. EU funding across 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods increased Sofia's metro network to 75 km of lines and 69 stations.



Burgas Leads Circular Economy Innovation

Burgas Region is spearheading circular economy efforts with the construction of an anaerobic installation for source-separated organic waste. The collaboration project among three municipalities – Burgas, Pomorie, and Nessebar – will process organic waste collected from over 250 000 residents. Eight bioreactors and a composting plant will generate electricity and heat from biogas. By diverting 71 000 tons of waste from landfills annually, this initiative sets a precedent for circular waste management practices.



Helicopter Emergency Medical Service

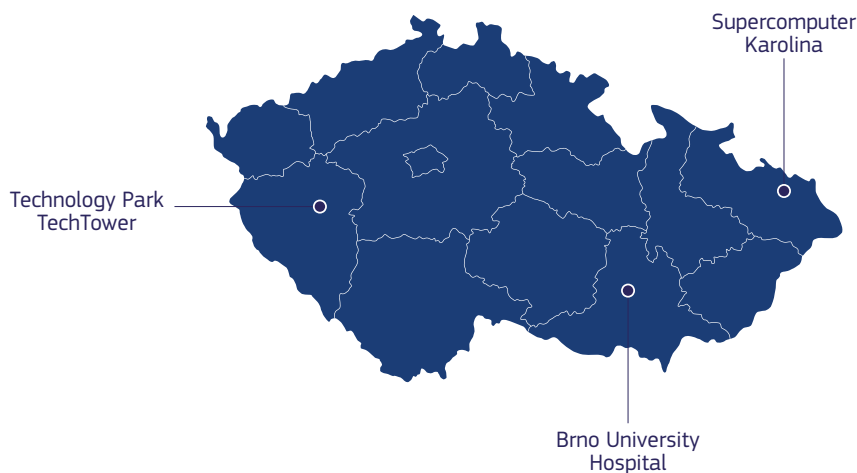
The Helicopter Emergency Medical Service heralds a new era in emergency healthcare accessibility, ensuring equal access to critical medical care. With the capability to reach patients within a 30-minute timeframe, the service overcomes the limitations of ground transport, which translates into more lives saved. The service also improves disaster response, enhances transplantation logistics, and supports coordination across the country and European coordination for swift medical evacuation and rescue operations.





Czechia's EU Cohesion Policy, executed through seven operational programmes, has yielded significant advancements across multiple sectors, notably transport, the environment, and social inclusion.

Cohesion Fund	€6.1 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€12.8 billion
European Social Fund	€3.7 billion



Key Achievements



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE BOOST
1 750 km of new and reconstructed roads and motorways.



ENHANCED CHILDCARE
Massive development of affordable, high-quality care facilities for pre-school children.



BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE REVITALISATION
Increased competitiveness of Czech companies thanks to improved business infrastructure.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY GAINS
Residential energy consumption reduced by 2.9 million GJ/year.



INNOVATIVE SOCIAL SERVICES
New social care models piloted, including mobile palliative teams.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Online Citizen Portal for public administration services launched.



STRENGTHENED HEALTHCARE

- 81 460 modernised beds in hospitals.
- 730 Emergency and other vehicles through REACT EU.
- 142 health workplaces supported.

Supercomputer Karolina

Karolina, the supercomputer project at [IT4Innovations](#) national supercomputing centre, signifies a leap towards exascale computing. The upgrade of this large research e-infrastructure not only bolsters research capabilities within the Czech Republic but also elevates the nation's standing in international research circles.



Technology Park TechTower

TechTower provides a dynamic space for tech enthusiasts, start-ups, and established firms alike. Transformed from a former brewery into a state-of-the-art science and technology park, TechTower offers flexible office spaces, coworking facilities, and unique test areas. This project fosters the growth of innovative firms and drives forward the region's technological advancement.



Brno University Hospital

Brno University Hospital's project focuses on enhancing patient care by acquiring advanced medical equipment and technology. The hospital aims to equip four surgical operating theatres with state-of-the-art operating tables, lights, cameras, and related technologies. This initiative underscores the hospital's commitment to elevating the quality of surgical care provided to patients.



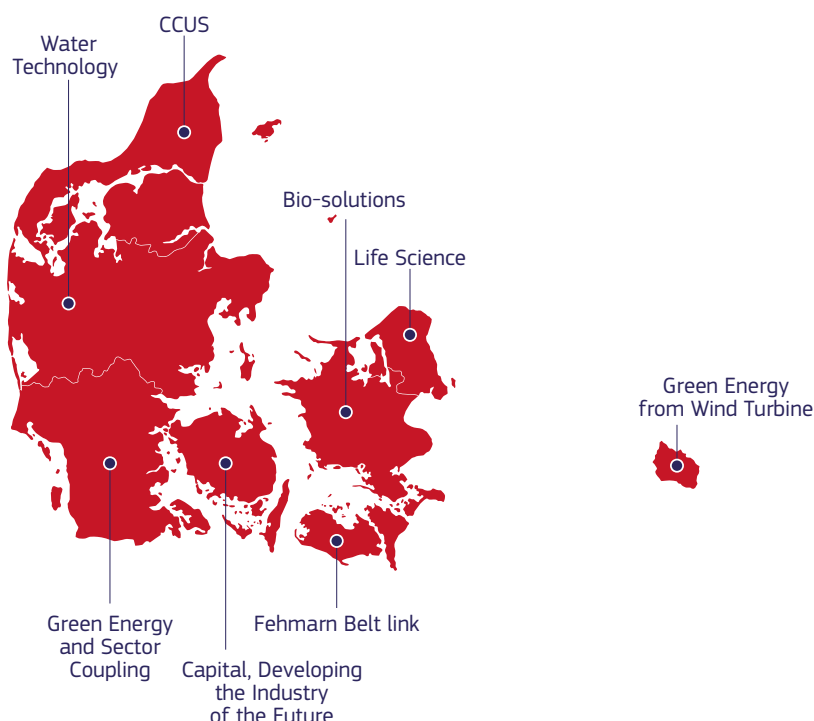
Denmark's regional fund programme prioritised innovation, growth, and sustainability in SMEs. The support focused mainly on business development through counselling, advice and co-operation and networking facilitation. Some material investments were also supported. These activities were closely coordinated with initiatives that aimed at strengthening the skills and competences of the workforce thereby equipping individuals and enterprises for future challenges. REACT EU funding extended the investments to the tourism and hospitality sectors and launched the Regional Lighthouses which are business strongholds in each region.

European Regional Development Fund

€362 million

European Social Fund

€268 million



Key Achievements



BUSINESS CREATION AND SUPPORT
Some 8 500 SMEs received funding.



INNOVATION PROMOTION

- Companies expanded networking channels; improved business structures and gained access to co-financing.
- Over 1 000 new products were brought to the market.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY GAINS
SMEs cut greenhouse gas emissions by almost 650 000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.



REACT EU RESPONSE

- SMEs supported in tourism and hospitality sectors during and after the COVID outbreak.
- Projects on technological strongholds of each region were launched using REACT EU.



SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
Interventions equipped almost 20 000 persons with skills for the future and supported more than 18 000 people in entrepreneurial efforts. Almost 19 000 jobs were created in participating enterprises.

Regional Lighthouse Projects Illuminate Denmark's Economic Landscape

Denmark has launched eight regional Business Lighthouses: [CCUS – North Jutland](#), [Bio-solutions - Zealand](#), [Fehmarn Belt link – Zealand](#), [Life Science - Capital](#), [Developing the Industry of the Future - Funen](#), [Green Energy and Sector Coupling – South Jutland](#), [Water Technology – Mid Jutland](#), and [Green Energy from Wind Turbines - Bornholm](#).

Each Lighthouse, tailored to local conditions, focuses on key sectors and particular strengths of the region. These Lighthouses combine support from EU and national funds leading to increased synergies in tackling, not only regional, but global challenges such as the green transition. The projects foster innovation in enterprises and improve their competitiveness. They also develop the skills and competences of the workforce while helping to create and maintain jobs in the regions. Demography-related welfare challenges is also an area that will be addressed.

Furthermore, the Business Lighthouses are an excellent example of how regional differences can be addressed within a national programme. They are also important in guaranteeing continuity in business support from one programming period to another. Let's take a closer look at one of the Business Lighthouses:



© Jens Peter Engedahl

Business Lighthouse for Water Technology

This initiative brings together the Danish water sector to create strong, innovative partnerships between utility companies, business, knowledge institutions, public actors and innovative small and medium-sized Danish companies. The Lighthouse embraces the entire Danish water sector and aims, through a large number of development projects, to help make the Danish water sector carbon and climate neutral by 2030.



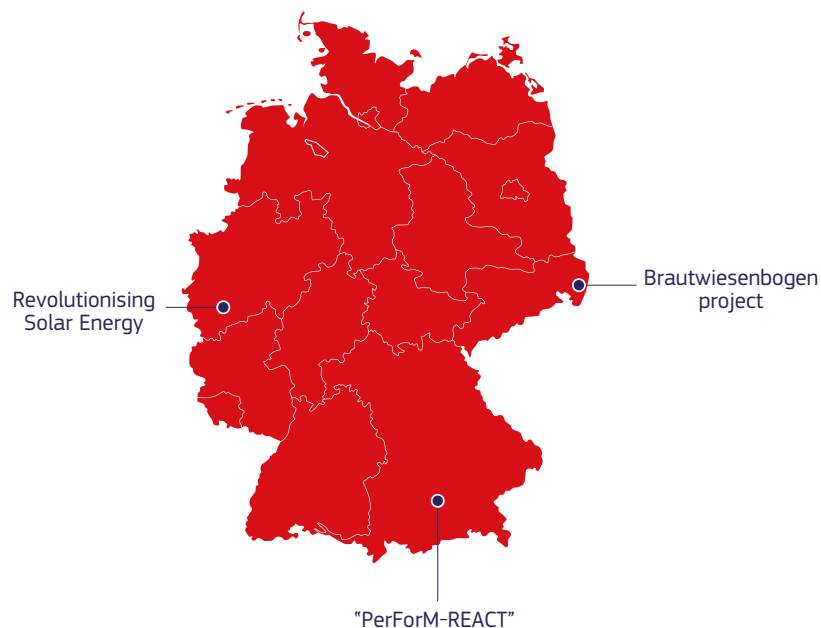
The aim of Cohesion Policy in Germany is to boost innovation, research, and development activities, enhance competitiveness of businesses and SMEs, create employment, and decrease primary energy consumption of public buildings, thus contributing to the country's socio-economic development and reducing regional disparities. In Germany, 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy was delivered through 33 programmes.

European Regional Development Fund

€12.3 billion

European Social Fund

€8.4 billion



Key Achievements



RESEARCH JOBS CREATION

- Over 2 700 full-time researcher jobs created.
- More than 10 300 researchers benefiting from enhanced research infrastructure.



ENTERPRISE INNOVATION

- Over 4 500 enterprises bringing new products to the market.
- Nearly 6 000 newly created enterprises.



CLIMATE MITIGATION

Projects contributed to a reduction of 711 702 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, or the emissions of about 90 000 EU citizens per year.



ENERGY CONSUMPTION

Decrease in primary energy consumption of public buildings by 63 076 710 kWh per year.



EMPLOYMENT

Creation of 22 000 full-time jobs in 56 504 enterprises.



URBAN REVITALISATION

- Renovation of 173 428 m² of buildings.
- Rejuvenation of over 2 million m² of open urban space.



© Matthias Balk - Helmholtz Munich

Advancing Pandemic Research

Located in Munich, Bavaria, the “PerForM-REACT” project has established a cutting-edge biosafety laboratory at the Helmholtz Munich research centre. Researchers now possess crucial infrastructure to conduct vital studies for pandemic prevention and management. The facility has created 25 new research positions and facilitates 28 projects worth €12.5 million, underscoring its significance in advancing future pandemic research.



Revitalising Görlitz

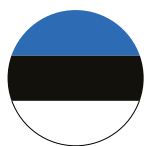
In Görlitz, Saxony/Germany, the [Brautwiesenberg project](#) is breathing new life into an area that had undergone decline. This initiative has transformed the landscape, adding green spaces, cycle paths, and recreation areas. It revitalised a disused freight station into a modern school, refurbished office spaces, and is supporting SMEs.

Innovative Solar Energy Solutions

The Langenfeld-based company paXos and the Technical University of Cologne have been working together on a solar roof that looks like a normal house roof, but still generates power for the building, making an important contribution to climate protection.

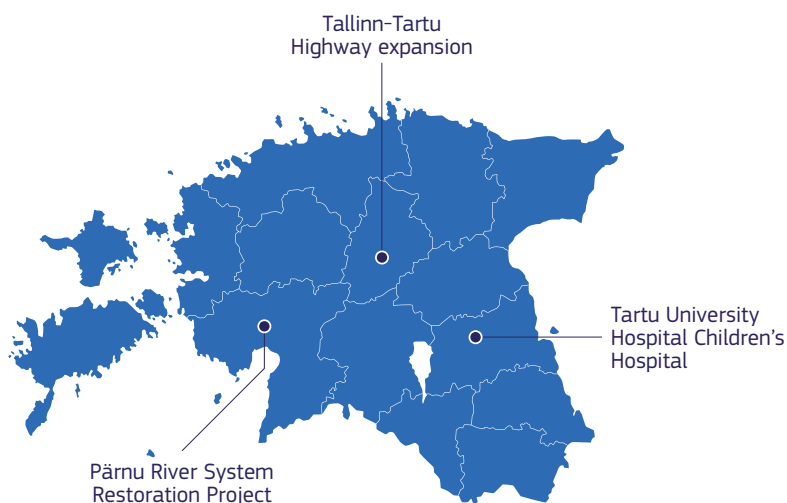
The project has elicited interest from the seat of Germany’s President, and it is now certain that the solar roof tiles will be mass-produced and sold on the open market.





Cohesion Policy funding in Estonia is channelled through one programme covering all three Cohesion Policy funds: the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, and European Social Fund, targeting areas such as health, education, research & innovation, connectivity, enterprise competitiveness, employment, and labour mobility, contributing to the country's socio-economic development and cohesion objectives.

Cohesion Fund	€1.1 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€2 billion
European Social Fund	€589 million



Key Achievements



EDUCATION AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Modernisation of over 140 000 m² of school space in general education schools.



CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS

Implementation of over 470 projects to enhance people's cyber hygiene and awareness.



QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVEMENTS

Adaptation of 1 990 housing units to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Restoration support for more than 130 million m² of protected habitats.



WASTEWATER TREATMENT SERVICES

Provision of wastewater treatment services benefiting more than 35 000 residents.



CLIMATE CHANGE PREPAREDNESS

- Deployment of 92 multifunctional rescue vehicles.
- Introduction of two marine pollution control vehicles.



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Renovation or reconstruction of more than 200 km of roads.

Tartu University Hospital Children’s Hospital

Tartu University Hospital Children’s Hospital at Maarjamõisa Medical Campus has recently unveiled Estonia’s most modern treatment facilities, catering to both the children’s clinic and ear clinic, along with a state-of-the-art operating block. Noteworthy enhancements include the updated premises for the facial and maxillofacial surgery department and the family centre, totalling nine modernised treatment units.



© Rauno Kadaja

Breathing Life into Pärnu River

Unlocking the flow for one of Estonia’s largest rivers, the Pärnu River System Restoration Project has revitalised crucial habitats and spawning areas. The initiative successfully removed a total of three fish migration barriers from the Pärnu River and four from its tributaries. Covering an extensive 3 300 km of interconnected river systems, this project stands as the largest river restoration endeavour in Estonia, setting a benchmark for river restoration projects across Europe.



The Tallinn-Tartu Highway Expansion

The completion of the Tallinn-Tartu Highway expansion in 2022 signifies a major leap forward for Estonia’s transportation infrastructure. The State Road No. 2, Tallinn–Tartu–Võru–Luhamaa Võõbu-Mäo road section, now features 2+2 lanes, promising safer and smoother traffic flow. This ambitious project included the construction of the Anna traffic junction, Võõbu, Anna, and Korba viaducts, Kruusiaugu and Kükita bridges, as well as the Puiatu ecoduct and dedicated bicycle and footpaths.



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Dia duit an Eoraip!

Cohesion Policy in Ireland has been instrumental in addressing regional disparities, fostering innovation, and promoting a greener, low-carbon economy. With two regional programmes in place, the focus has been on enhancing research excellence, skills development, energy efficiency measures, and urban revitalisation.

European Regional Development Fund

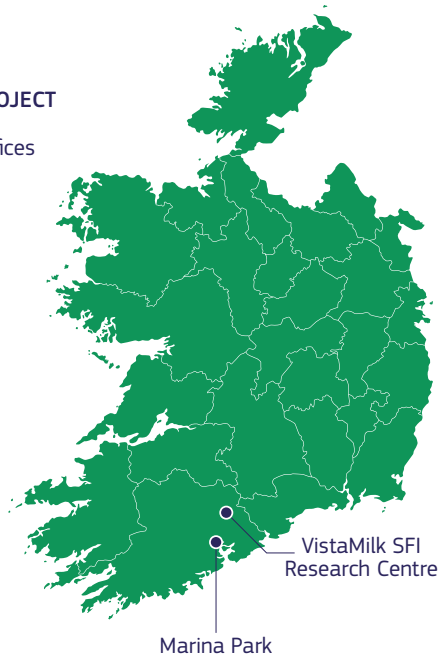
€471 million

European Social Fund

€553 million

MULTI-LOCATION PROJECT

- Local Enterprise Offices Supporting SMEs



Key Achievements



RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Over 850 new researchers are contributing to top research projects across Irish regions.



ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

- More than 80 000 individuals benefited from enterprise training programmes.
- Over 43 000 SMEs received vital support.



INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Research-industry collaborations surged, with over 1 000 industry partners engaging with strategic research centres.



URBAN REVITALISATION

- 22 urban projects revitalised town centres, making them more vibrant and liveable.
- Urban renewal initiatives successfully completed in cities including Galway, Dundalk, Letterkenny, and Waterford.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Over 20 000 households experiencing energy poverty benefitted from energy efficiency improvements.

Local Enterprise Offices Supporting SMEs

Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have been instrumental in supporting SMEs across Ireland, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation. Noteworthy is the case of Clare-based business Get the Shifts, which received substantial backing from LEO in Clare. Get the Shifts founder Hannah Wrixon's journey from addressing childcare needs to revolutionising the hospitality staffing industry underscores the transformative impact of LEO support.



© Gettyimages

Marina Park, Cork City

An attractive new amenity just a 2.5km cycle or walk from the city centre, the park is a key economic driver and catalyst for Cork Docklands. It incorporates lawns, walkways, water features and new car parking spaces. It also encourages physical activity and supports ecology, biodiversity, culture and outdoor events.



VistaMilk SFI Research Centre

The VistaMilk Research Centre embodies a pioneering collaboration between Agri-Food, ICT, education, and research entities, aimed at revolutionising Ireland's dairy sector. By leveraging advanced technologies and decision support tools, VistaMilk aims to optimise the entire dairy production chain, setting a global benchmark for excellence in the Agri-Tech sector. VistaMilk seeks to enhance environmental stewardship, animal welfare, and consumer health.





Γεια σου Ευρώπη!

With 18 regional and thematic programmes in place, Cohesion Policy in Greece plays a pivotal role in advancing European objectives for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. By allocating essential funding to the real economy, this policy supports a diverse range of initiatives, including bolstering small and medium-sized enterprises, driving forward research and innovation efforts, safeguarding the environment, and fostering education, training, employment, and social inclusion.

Cohesion Fund	€2.8 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€11 billion
European Social Fund	€4.5 billion

MULTI-LOCATION PROJECT

- Equifund



Key Achievements



ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUPPORT

- Nearly 475 000 enterprises supported.
- 56 000 start-ups received funding to seed and grow.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Improved energy efficiency in around 46 000 households.
- Energy consumption reduced by 2.2 million kWh/year.



ENVIRONMENTAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- 355 673 people benefit from improved wastewater supply networks.
- 706 534 people served by new or upgraded drinking water supply.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION BOOST

Creation of 4 000 research jobs and support for numerous research centres.



TRANSPORT TRANSFORMATION

- Extension the metro line to Piraeus, benefiting 174 000 residents.
- Private vehicle use reduced by 23 000 cars/day.
- Carbon dioxide emissions cut by 120 tonnes/day.

Metro Line Extension Improves Piraeus Mobility

The expansion of the metro line to Piraeus, one of the largest projects funded by Cohesion Policy in the EU and in Greece, has transformed travel to the Athens port district, benefitting the citizens of Piraeus who now have easy access to the administrative, commercial, and business centre of the city. Thanks to the new connections the metro line reduces private vehicle usage by 23 000 cars per day, slashing carbon dioxide emissions.



Chania's New Archaeological Museum

Nestled in the historic suburb of Chalepa, the Archaeological Museum of Chania stands as a cultural gem. Spanning over 5 600 square meters, this iconic museum showcases a rich collection of Minoan and Roman artifacts, enriching the city's cultural landscape. Beyond exhibition spaces, it houses administrative offices, laboratories, and an auditorium, fostering both cultural enrichment and tourism in Chania.



Equifund: Turning Innovative Ideas into Businesses

EquiFund is an investment initiative of the Greek state and the European Investment Fund. It is financed by ERDF, EIF and private investors. EquiFund is unleashing the potential of young talented human capital in Greece by supporting young entrepreneurs in turning their innovative ideas into businesses. By the end of 2023, 140 startups in emerging and innovative sectors had received financial support. It has been calculated that every euro invested through the fund, corresponds to approximately 8.2 euros of total investment. Moreover, the portfolio of supported investments includes business ventures by scientists from Greek academic and research institutions, thereby creating synergies between academia and business.





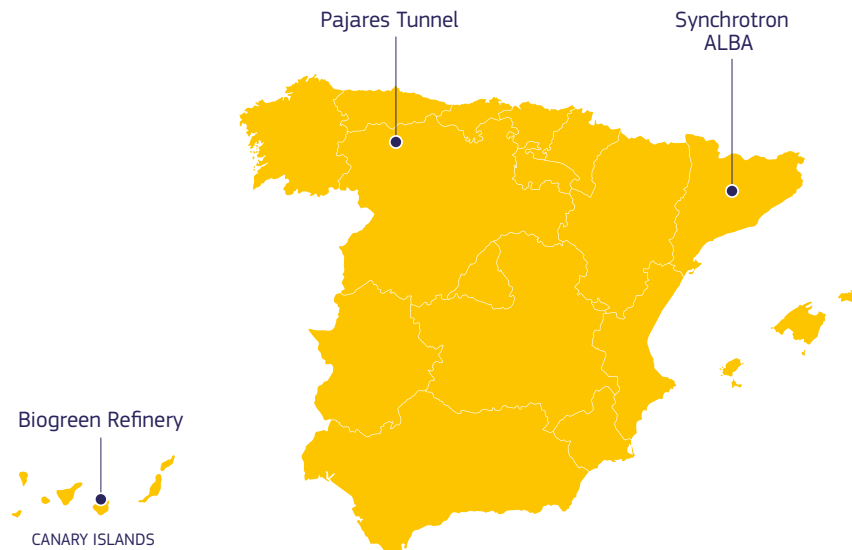
Cohesion Policy in Spain was delivered through 38 regional programmes, five national programmes and an additional initiative specifically tailored to support SMEs. Key focus areas included enhancing enterprise competitiveness, fostering job creation, bridging the digital divide, promoting renewable energy, improving education infrastructure, and revitalising urban spaces.

European Regional Development Fund

€29 billion

European Social Fund

€13 billion



Key Achievements



ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

75 618 enterprises received financial backing to enhance their competitiveness.



JOB CREATION

4 725 new jobs created.



BROADBAND ACCESS

5 303 713 households gained access to broadband services.



RENEWABLE ENERGY

192 MW of renewable energy capacity added, predominantly from solar and wind.



EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE

756 980 students benefit from education infrastructure investment.



URBAN SPACE RENOVATION

44 902 m² of urban spaces renovated.

Biogreen Refinery

The Biogreen Refinery in Gran Canaria is a trailblazer in renewable energy. With a focus on green hydrogen technologies and renewable fuel production, it is leading the charge towards decarbonising transportation. This innovative project sets a precedent for sustainable energy solutions, setting course towards a greener future for the Canary Islands and beyond.



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Pajares Railway Tunnel

The Pajares Tunnel is a vital link in Spain's high-speed rail network, connecting Madrid, Castilla y León and Asturias. By significantly reducing travel times, it enhances regional connectivity and promotes sustainable transport. A testimony to the impact of cohesion funding, it improves citizens' daily lives and helps foster economic development across regions.



Synchrotron ALBA

The Synchrotron ALBA is a state-of-the-art research facility in Cataluña. With advanced electron accelerators, it sheds light on the atomic structure of matter, facilitating groundbreaking discoveries and applications. Hosting over 2 000 researchers annually, it's a hub of academic and industrial collaboration, driving innovation and advancing our understanding of the world around us.



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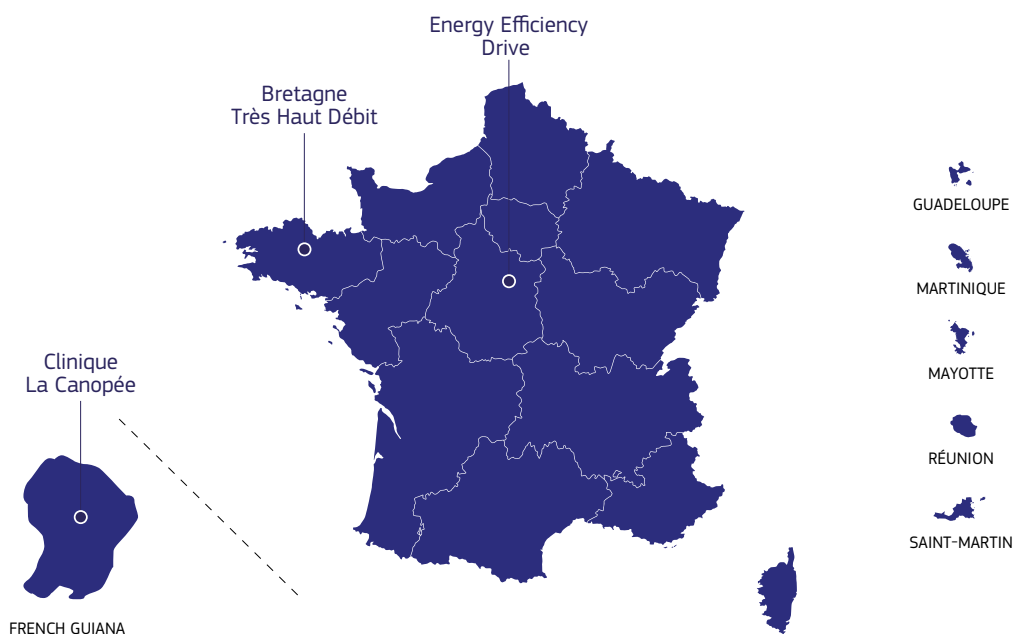
Cohesion Policy plays an important role in contributing to various sectors across France, aiming to foster innovation, enhance competitiveness, and facilitate sustainable development. In total, 40 regional programmes support diverse areas including research, business competitiveness, technology adoption, and environmental conservation.

European Regional Development Fund

€11 billion

European Social Fund

€6.6 billion



Key Achievements



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

- 2 462 new research jobs created.
- 23 000 researchers benefitting from improved infrastructure.



BUSINESS SUPPORT

- 700 SMEs supported to develop and launch new products.
- 160 000 companies with better access to finance, services, and markets.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

- Over 700 000 hectares of habitats benefitted from protection measures.
- 1.1 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent avoided.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Reduction of public buildings' energy consumption by 59 MWh/year.



RENEWABLE ENERGY

Increase in renewable energy production capacity by nearly 1 300 MW.



CIVIL PROTECTION

Over 1 700 000 individuals benefited from flood protection measures.

Fiber for all in Brittany

[Bretagne Très Haut Débit](#) aims to furnish Bretons with swift and seamless internet connectivity through the extensive deployment of fibre optics across the entire region. A joint initiative between Brittany's local authorities and the region itself, it aims to ensure high-speed internet access for 90% of Brittany, benefiting 60% of its population.



Energy Efficiency Drive in Centre-Val de Loire

In total, 62 high schools and one cultural establishment in the Centre-Val de Loire region are undergoing a significant energy makeover. With the installation of thermal insulation, modernisation of boiler rooms, and integration of photovoltaic panels, the initiative aims to slash energy demand, upgrade aging infrastructure, and transition to greener energy sources.



Healthcare establishment Clinique La Canopée in French Guiana

Clinique La Canopée is pioneering the establishment of a specialised follow-up care and rehabilitation facility for children and adolescents in French Guiana.

By facilitating shorter hospital stays, promoting family reunification, and extending care to those previously underserved, the initiative not only addresses critical healthcare gaps but also promises to elevate paediatric rehabilitation in the region.



Pozdrav, Europo!

Croatia's Cohesion Policy programme focuses on enhancing economic competitiveness, aligning with EU environmental standards, and investing in transport and network infrastructure. Moreover, it supports investments in education (e-Schools) and vocational training, promotes social inclusion through improved community-based and primary healthcare services, and promotes urban sustainable development through integrated territorial investments.

Cohesion Fund	€2.1 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€4.8 billion
European Social Fund	€ 2.15 billion

MULTI-LOCATION PROJECTS

- e-Schools
- METMONIC



Pelješac bridge

Key Achievements



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- Improved conditions for 881 researchers.
- Nearly 300 companies collaborate with research organisations, bridging academia-industry gaps.



ENHANCED FLOOD PROTECTION

- 136 000 people benefit from flood protection measures.



ENHANCED ISLAND ACCESSIBILITY

- Upgrading of 10 seaports and construction of 1 new seaport.
- Construction of 4.82 km of access roads to ports.



HEALTH SECTOR SUPPORT

- Financial support to 1 344 primary and 27 hospital health care providers.
- Modernisation of the health system.



BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS

- Support to 3 000+ small businesses, creating over 20 000 jobs.
- Construction of 700 000+ m² of business space.



IMPROVED TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

- Construction of 44.42 km of new roads and 9.02 km of bypasses.
- Better connectivity for southern Croatia and enhanced regional accessibility.



EMERGENCY MARITIME MEDICAL SERVICE

- Creation of a fleet of six fast boats along the coast.
- Enhanced safety and health preservation.

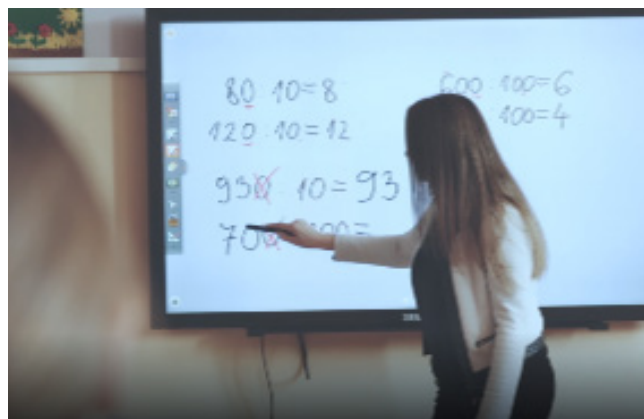


DIGITALISATION OF EDUCATION

- Digitalisation of all public primary and secondary schools, benefiting over 180 000 students and 60 000 teachers.

Empowering Digital Education

The e-Schools initiative is revolutionising Croatian education. Over 1 300 schools receive support to equip teachers and students with vital IT skills. The project provides laptops, establishes wireless networks, and delivers digital educational content, fostering innovative teaching methods.



© Carnet



METMONIC: Advancing Weather Observation

METMONIC is modernising Croatia's weather observation network with cutting-edge meteorological systems. In total, 410 modern automatic meteorological systems provide continuous, traceable, reliable, high quality and timely information on the state of the atmosphere and the sea. The system improves early-warning of hazardous weather and thereby increases national security and helps to preserve property and human lives.

Enhancing Adriatic Connectivity

Pelješac Bridge is the largest single EU investment in Croatian infrastructure. By connecting the regions of Dubrovnik and Split, it cuts travel time along the Adriatic coast by 37 minutes. The improved accessibility enhances people's lives and boosts economic opportunities and territorial cohesion.





Italy's 51 thematic and regional programmes target a wide range of sectors, from business support and research to renewable energy and transport. Italy also boasts a pioneering programme solely dedicated to culture, focusing on preserving key cultural sites in its southern regions.

European Regional Development Fund

€27.7 billion

European Social Fund

€20 billion



Key Achievements



WATER MANAGEMENT

Over 4 million additional people benefit from water management projects.



ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

Over 781 000 enterprises received support.



ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY

- 500 km of new and reconstructed railways
- 40 new electric trains in the South.
- Almost 5.5 million buildings gain access to broadband.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- 130 707 711 Kw/year decrease in primary energy consumption of public buildings.
- Almost 10 000 new users connected to smart grids.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Nearly 2 000 research jobs created, driving innovation and knowledge creation.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: NEW PRODUCTS

Over 12 000 enterprises supported to introduce new products for the market or for firms.

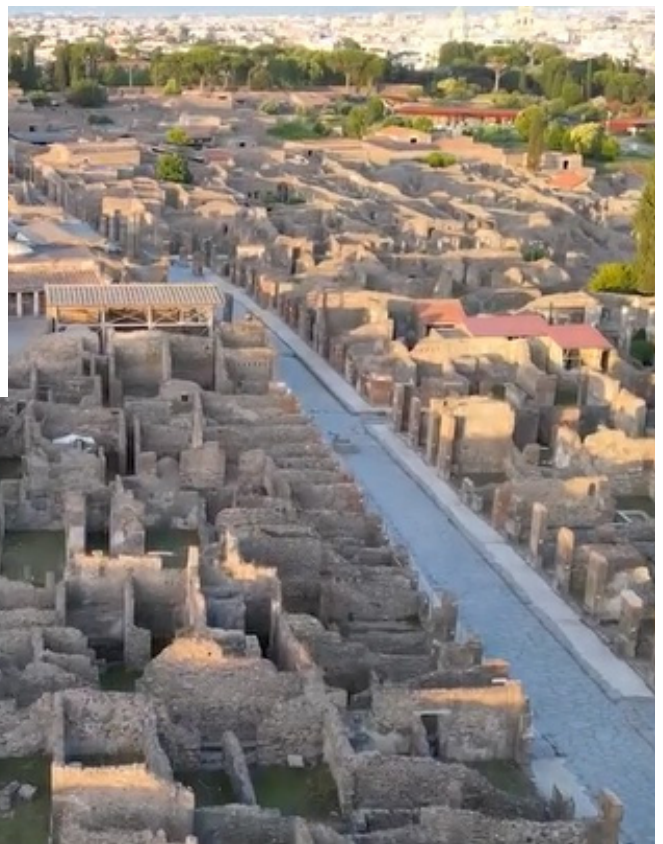
Impoundment and Valorisation of the Regi Lagni

Five wastewater treatment plants in Acerra, Marcianise, Napoli Nord, Foce Regi Lagni and Cuma were substantially refurbished in a project that involves repairing or replacing damaged installations and non-functioning equipment. The revamped plants can treat well over 166 million cubic meters of water annually, benefitting 2 million of the region's residents.



Pompeii Restoration - Phase II

Pompeii, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997, underwent significant restoration through the Great Pompeii Project. Launched to combat degradation and enhance structural conservation at the historical site, this initiative is hailed as a model for similar endeavours worldwide.



Sicily's Rail Revamp

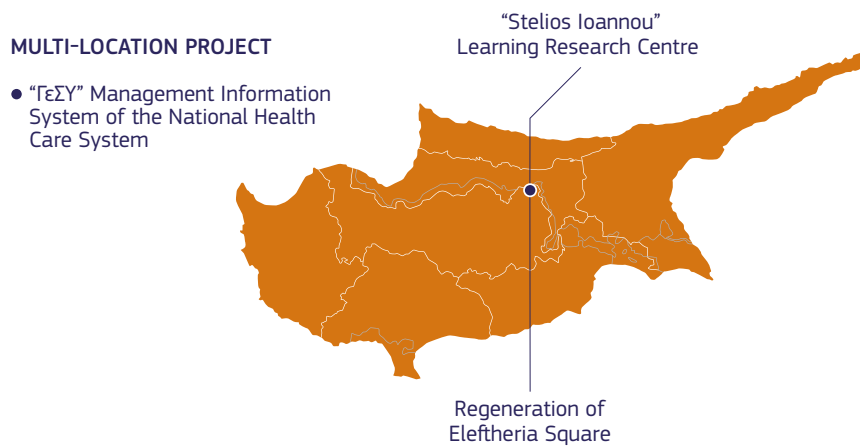
Sicily's rail network has undergone a transformative upgrade with the acquisition of 25 cutting-edge zero-emission POP electric trains. Fuelled by a Region of Sicily investment initiative, this fleet renewal not only enhances service quality and punctuality but also elevated customer satisfaction levels.





Cohesion Policy in Cyprus aims to boost competitiveness and growth. The programme targeted key areas, including urban infrastructure, healthcare, energy efficiency, social services, waste management, climate change adaptation, transportation, research, education, and pandemic response.

Cohesion Fund	€259 million
European Regional Development Fund	€367 million
European Social Fund	€215 million



Key Achievements



JOB CREATION
24 000 new jobs created.



SOCIAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT
Twice as many vulnerable people benefit from development and upgrading of social services infrastructures



URBAN MOBILITY
25 km of cycling lanes, 9 km of bus lanes, and 200 000 m² of pedestrian infrastructure constructed.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DEVELOPMENT

- 12 new research infrastructures established.
- 700 research positions created.
- R&I expenditure increases from 0.48% to 0.80% of GDP.



ENHANCED WASTE MANAGEMENT
Waste reduction programmes benefit 114 municipalities and local communities.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- Measures to mitigate soil erosion and rising sea levels.
- Coastal landscapes and habitats preserved.



COVID-19 RESPONSE
Over 130 000 workers supported through short-term working arrangement schemes.



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
29 500 students per year benefited from school and inclusion actions in education.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY
Thousands of households and hundreds of households benefit from energy efficiency investment.

General Health System IT

Cyprus is leading the way in healthcare innovation with its General Health System (GHS), ensuring universal coverage. This comprehensive IT system, implemented in two phases, centralises all medical activities, from patient visits to prescriptions, revolutionising healthcare management and delivery. The project address existing inequalities in healthcare coverage across the entire population by ensuring that high-quality services are provided based on need, and not ability to pay.



© Directorate General Growth, Ministry of Finance of Cyprus



Stelios Ioannou Library

The '[Stelios Ioannou](#)' Library at the University of Cyprus is not just a collection of books – it's a beacon of learning and innovation. With state-of-the-art facilities including study spaces, an auditorium, services for students with disabilities and technology lab, it's more than a library - it's a vibrant hub for 10 000 students and researchers alike.

Eleftheria Square Regeneration

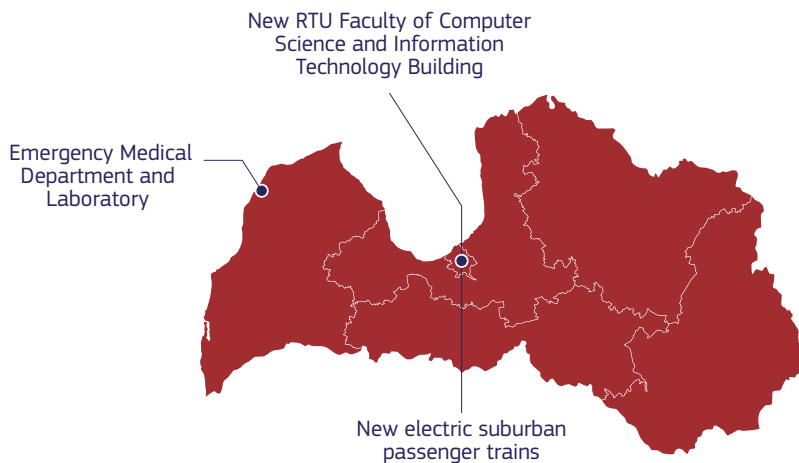
The Eleftheria Square regeneration project has breathed new life into the heart of Nicosia, with an urban park, inviting fountains, recreational amenities, and an 80-seat amphitheatre. This urban renewal has already become a beloved gathering spot for locals and tourists alike, hosting cultural events and celebrating special occasions and causes. Moreover, it invigorates the local economy by attracting visitors to nearby establishments, contributing to the city's overall socio-economic revitalisation.





With one programme, backed by three funds, Cohesion Policy in Latvia has been instrumental in driving economic growth and employment. Focused on transport and low carbon priorities, the initiative has also created jobs, expanded renewable energy capacity, improved broadband access for thousands of households, and supported numerous enterprises and start-ups.

Cohesion Fund	€1.2 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€2.7 billion
European Social Fund	€728 million



Key Achievements



RENEWABLE ENERGY BOOST
21 MW in additional renewable energy capacity.



ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY
69 300 households gained access to broadband internet.



SUPPORT FOR ENTERPRISES

- Financial aid provided to 5 391 enterprises.
- 1 551 start-ups supported.



JOB CREATION
4 068 full-time equivalent jobs were created in Latvian firms.



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
297 km of reconstructed TEN-T roads.

Electric Suburban Passenger Trains

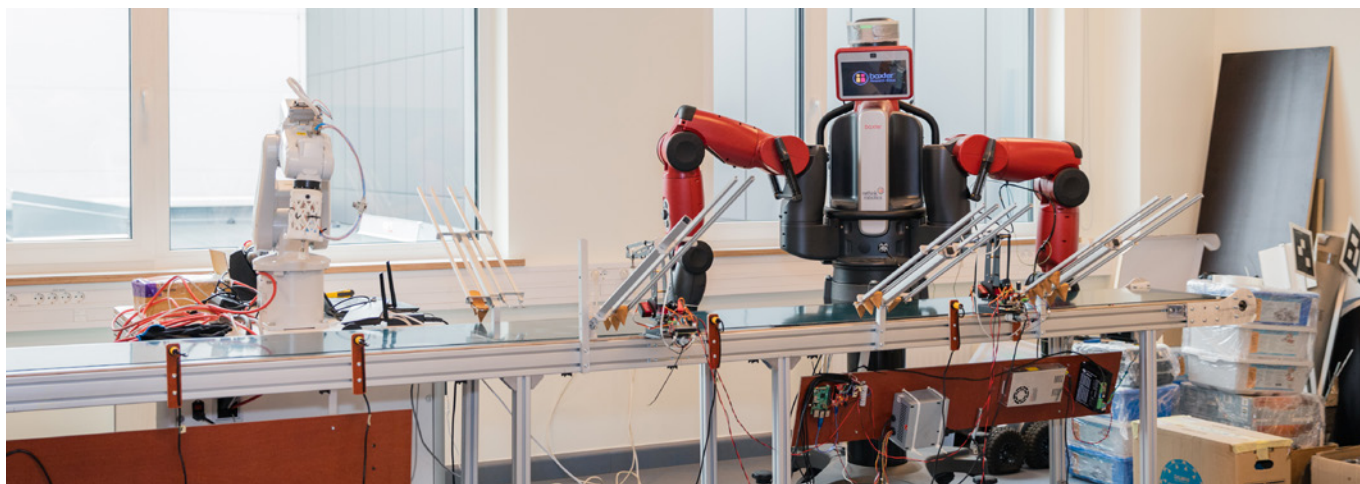
The introduction of new electric suburban passenger trains in the Riga metropolitan area marks a significant stride towards environmentally friendly commuting. With the purchase of 23 modern trains and improved accessibility and safety across 48 local stations, commuters can enjoy a more pleasant travel experience.



© Reinis Hofmanis

New RTU Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology Building

Riga Technical University (RTU) continues its commitment to providing cutting-edge education by unveiling its latest addition – the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology Building. Designed to offer a modern and comfortable environment, this facility underscores RTU’s vision of becoming the leading engineering study centre in the Baltics.



Emergency Medical Department and Laboratory at Ventspils Hospital

The opening of the emergency medical department and laboratory at Ventspils Hospital is an important step towards better access to healthcare in the region. With a focus on cardiovascular, oncology, and child healthcare, along with improved responsiveness to infectious diseases, this initiative elevates the quality and efficiency of medical services and ensures better healthcare outcomes for the community.



Lithuania's Cohesion Policy is aimed at helping the country's economic development as well as tackling social exclusion, unemployment, and vital issues like energy security. It reflects the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy with a clear emphasis on boosting research and innovation, SME competitiveness, the shift to a low-carbon economy, the promotion of human capital, and the fight against poverty.

Cohesion Fund	€2 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€3.7 billion
European Social Fund	€€1.25 billion



MULTI-LOCATION AND NATIONWIDE PROJECTS

- Solar Power for Sustainable Living
- Empowering energy-efficient renovations, the Jessica II Fund of Funds
- "Let's Move" Youth Empowerment

Key Achievements



BUSINESS SUPPORT

- 12 000 enterprises received financial support.
- 2 000 startups supported.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Improved energy consumption classification for 522 000 households.



INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

100 km of TEN-T roads and 63 km of railway lines built or upgraded.



JOB CREATION

1 103 new jobs created in firms.



RENEWABLE ENERGY EXPANSION

320 MW of renewable energy capacity added.



CLEAN WATER

- Expanded wastewater treatment for 500 000 people.
- 344 000 people with improved water supply.

Solar Power for Sustainable Living

Harnessing solar energy, this project has installed over 18 400 solar power installations for households, equating to 148 MW of capacity and annual CO₂ savings of 28 800 tonnes. The project contributes to increasing the local electricity generation capacity in households and making the green transition just for all. It not only reduces carbon emissions but also enhances energy independence, contributing to healthier communities and a cleaner environment. ensure high-speed internet access for 90% of Brittany, benefiting 60% of its population.



Jessica II Fund of Funds

Empowering energy-efficient renovations, the Jessica II Fund of Funds provides financing in the form of loans and guarantees for multi-apartment building renovation projects, which aim at boosting energy efficiency and reducing environmental impact. With an investment of €150 million, it supported 40 000 households. The investments have reduced energy consumption and costs and lessened the country's dependence on gas imports.



“Let’s Move” Youth Empowerment

Addressing youth unemployment and disengagement, the “Let’s Move” project supported 1 500 young individuals aged 15-29, with tailored measures. Through early interventions, vocational training, and personal development services, it empowers youth to re-enter education or employment, fostering skills, confidence, and integration into society. This initiative aims at building a brighter future for Lithuania’s youth, one step at a time.



Bonjour l'Europe!
Hallo Europa!

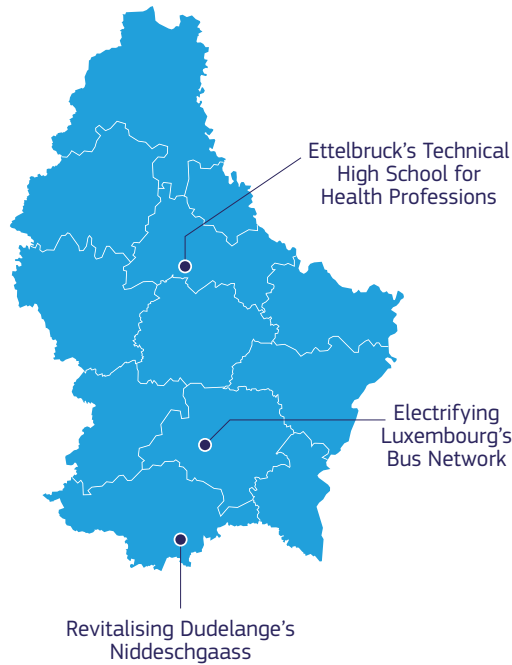
Luxembourg's Cohesion Policy, implemented through one programme, has yielded significant results aligned with the nation's strategic priorities. With a focused approach on research enhancement and fostering a low-carbon economy, the programme has catalysed transformative developments.

European Regional Development Fund

€89 million

European Social Fund

€93 million



Key Achievements



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Improved collaboration between 111 enterprises and research institutions.



EMPLOYMENT BOOST

Creation of 107 full-time equivalent research positions.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN BUILDINGS

321 300 Kw/year reduction in primary energy consumption of public buildings.



HOUSEHOLD ENERGY IMPROVEMENT

Enhanced energy consumption classification for 2 161 households.



Electrifying Luxembourg's Bus Network

The City of Luxembourg is embracing sustainability with the electrification of its bus network, introducing 13 electric buses and two charging infrastructures. This initiative reduces diesel consumption and cuts greenhouse gas emissions by a significant 2 085 tonnes annually. The transition to electric buses enhances public transport quality and comfort, while mitigating noise pollution.



Innovative High School for Health Professions

Ettelbruck's Technical High School for Health Professions is pioneering a groundbreaking "positive energy" approach, aiming to generate more energy than it consumes. This visionary concept encompasses not only operational energy but also considers embodied energy for construction and demolition. By co-financing elements directly related to energy production, the project sets a new standard for sustainable public buildings.

Revitalising Dudelange's Niddeschgaass

Dudelange's Niddeschgaass has undergone a comprehensive redevelopment aligned with regional traffic strategies, prioritising pedestrians and cyclists to reduce motorised traffic and emissions. By fostering sustainable urban environments, this project combats climate change and improves the well-being and comfort of residents and visitors.



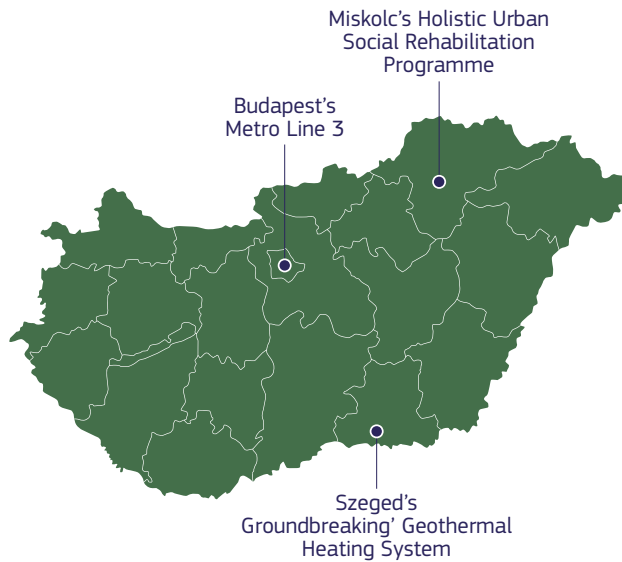
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Helló Európa!

Hungary's Cohesion Policy targets investments across seven thematic programmes. These initiatives, centred on competitiveness, innovation, economic development, environmental protection, energy efficiency, transport infrastructure, skills enhancement, and urban rejuvenation, have reshaped the nation's landscape.

Cohesion Fund	€6 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€11.3 billion
European Social Fund	€5 billion



Key Achievements



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Construction or reconstruction of over 670 km of road, rail, tram, and metro lines.



URBAN REGENERATION

Upgrade of more than 300 000 square meters of open public spaces, benefiting 1.3 million people.



BROADBAND EXPANSION

Extension of broadband network to over 400 000 households.



HEALTHCARE MODERNISATION

Renovation of over 2 000 primary healthcare units.



EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE EXPANSION

- Creation or enhancement of over 10 000 nursery and nearly 50 000 kindergarten places.
- 199 155 students benefit from renovated schools.



BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & SKILLS

- 3 700 hectares of new business parks, accommodating approximately 8 300 SMEs.
- 65 000 individuals participated in skills training.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY ENHANCEMENTS

Improved energy efficiency in over 550 000 households and public buildings.

Szeged's Groundbreaking Geothermal Heating System

Szeged, boasting Europe's largest urban geothermal heating network outside of Iceland, has embraced a sustainable energy revolution. With 27 wells, 16 heating plants, and 250 kilometres of distribution pipes, the city now enjoys clean energy, reduced emissions, and decreased reliance on imported gas. Championed as the 'Szeged model', this innovative heating system sets a precedent for other municipalities seeking to harness geothermal energy for environmental and economic benefit.



Revitalising Budapest's Metro Line 3

Budapest's Metro Line 3 has undergone a remarkable transformation, making it fully accessible and safer for all commuters. With refurbished stations featuring traditional and specially inclined elevators, tactile paving for the visually impaired, and enhanced safety measures including new control systems and emergency call points, passengers can now navigate the metro with ease and peace of mind.



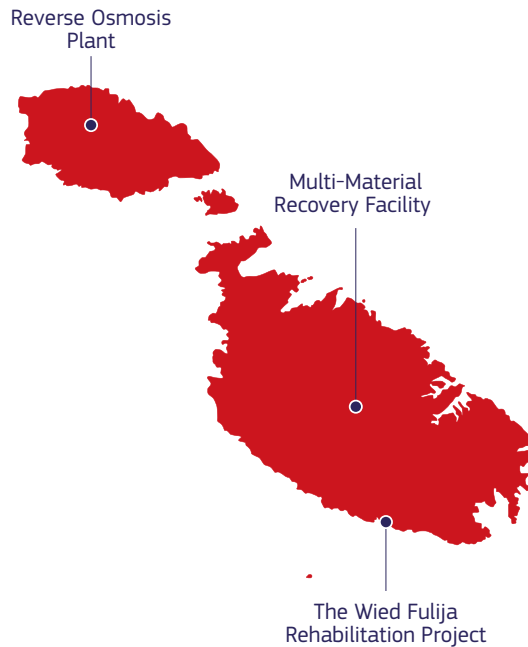
Miskolc's Holistic Urban Social Rehabilitation Programme

In Miskolc, a comprehensive urban social rehabilitation programme is tackling socio-economic challenges entrenched in former industrial neighbourhoods. Aimed at fostering social integration and addressing disparities, the initiative adopts a multifaceted approach to uplift communities at risk of marginalisation. With a keen focus on sustainability and long-term impact, this project signifies a commitment to nurturing inclusive and resilient urban environments, laying the groundwork for lasting socio-economic progress and cohesion in the region.



Malta's Cohesion Policy has yielded transformative results across two programmes, addressing significant challenges while fostering economic growth and sustainability. With a focus on research and innovation, sustainable water and waste management, energy efficiency and renewable energy, healthcare and education investments, the programmes have delivered major benefits.

Cohesion Fund	€204 million
European Regional Development Fund	€379 million
European Social Fund	€246 million



Key Achievements



WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Set up of one waste recovery facility.
- Rehabilitation of 9.1 hectares of former landfill at Wied Fulija.



ENHANCED WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Improved water supply to 32 000 residents in Gozo.



LOW CARBON TRANSITION

Addition of 22 MW of renewable energy capacity.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

78 vocational education and training labs set up, catering to over 15 000 individuals.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

R&I investment supports 67.3 full-time equivalent researchers working in improved research infrastructure facilities.

Reverse Osmosis Plant in Gozo

As part of the Major Project "Towards a Net Zero Impact Water Utility," a new Reverse Osmosis plant was set up within an existing infrastructure at Hondoq in Gozo. With limited availability of groundwater as the primary natural water source in Malta, this initiative addresses water scarcity exacerbated by long dry seasons and low rainfall. The plant can produce up to 9 000 cubic meters of water daily and allows Gozo's population to be self-sufficient in the provision of water.



Rehabilitation of the Former Landfill at Wied Fulija

The Wied Fulija Rehabilitation Project involves the rehabilitation of an area of scenic beauty, previously used as landfill, while mitigating environmental impact. By reducing air pollution and creating footpaths along the former landfill perimeter, the project aims to safeguard the environment and improve the quality of life for neighbouring communities, while returning a very scenic area back to the general public.

The setting up of a Multi-Material Recovery Facility

The Multi-Material Recovery Facility in Malta is key to ensuring the highest possible re-use and recovery of waste, while contributing to Malta's path towards reducing the volume of waste going to landfill. This facility gathers different streams of waste, such as wood, mattresses, textiles, flat glass, waste electrical and electronic equipment, expanded polystyrene, gypsum and tyres, preparing and storing materials for recycling and export, diverting them away from landfills and promoting a circular economy.

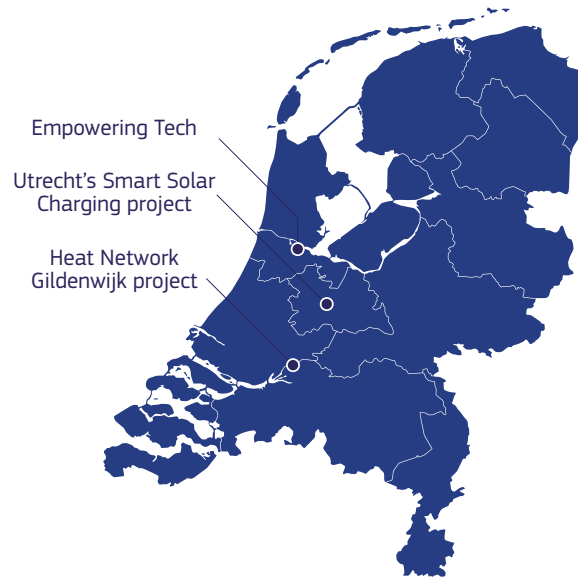




Hallo Europa!

In the Netherlands, four regional programmes are playing a pivotal role in shaping innovation policies and bolstering regional ecosystems. Aligned with smart specialisation strategies, these programmes account for around 35% of innovation investments by the Dutch provinces. Supported by a blend of national and private funding these initiatives are driving economic growth, innovation, and sustainability across the regions.

European Regional Development Fund	€791 million
European Social Fund	€791 million



| Key Achievements



SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS

- 5 700 enterprises received vital support.
- €303 million leveraged in private investments.



RESEARCH & INNOVATION

- 514 enterprises collaborated with research institutions.
- 1 758 enterprises successfully introduced new products to the market.
- 2 357 enterprises developed products new to them.



LOW-CARBON TRANSITION

119 MW of additional renewable energy production capacity installed.

Pioneering Sustainable Heat

In Gorinchem, the Heat Network Gildenwijk project is pioneering a sustainable heat source using thermal energy from wastewater to provide 993 homes with eco-friendly heating. The project has achieved a remarkable 58% reduction in CO₂ emissions by leveraging innovative techniques and existing infrastructure and offering an alternative to natural gas.



Smart Solar Charging for Sustainable Mobility

Utrecht's [Smart Solar Charging](#) project is revolutionising urban mobility with bi-directional charging for shared electric cars. By enabling car batteries to both charge and supply energy to the grid, the project optimises the use energy during peak demand periods. Piloted in five city areas, this initiative paves the way for scalable solutions.



Empowering Tech in Amsterdam

[TechGrounds](#) aims to bridge the gap in the IT job market and democratise access to tech skills. TechGrounds has successfully trained 227 individuals in Amsterdam's New West area, with 60% now employed. This initiative not only addresses talent shortages but also fosters diversity in the labour market, offering a pathway for thousands to enter the tech industry.





Hallo Europa!

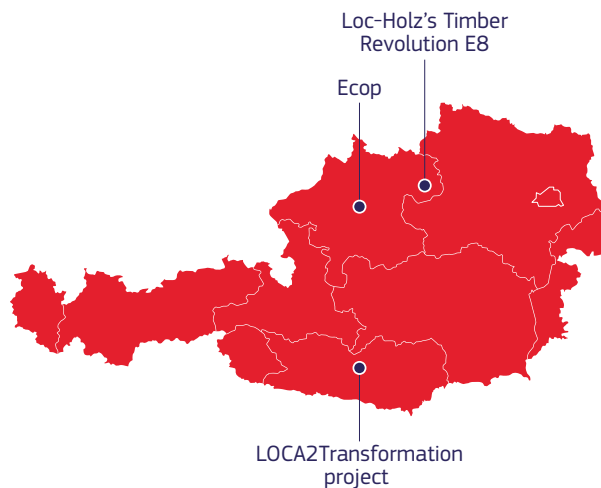
Funding in Austria focuses on several key areas. It aims to boost innovation, research and development activities, as well as energy efficiency within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It supports technology transfer and invests in research and development infrastructure. Finally, the European Regional Development Fund supports sustainable urban development strategies in Vienna and urban regions in Upper Austria, as well as integrated development approaches involving local stakeholders in rural areas in Tyrol.

European Regional Development Fund

€694 million

European Social Fund

€556 million



Key Achievements



RESEARCH, INNOVATION, INVESTMENT

- 60 enterprises collaborating with research institutions in R&D projects.
- Over 1 000 enterprises received financing for productive investments and energy efficiency.
- Resulted in more than €1.4 billion in private investments.



JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

- 4 367 jobs created.
- Annual decrease of almost 124 000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.



URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CITIZEN IMPACT

Close to 750 000 citizens benefit from integrated urban development strategies.

Ecop: Revolutionising Industrial Heat Recovery

[Ecop](#), a cutting-edge tech firm in Upper Austria, introduces the “K7” rotation heat pump. This innovative solution, with a 700 kW thermal output, redefines heat pump standards for effectiveness at temperatures up to 150°C. Ecop’s tech enables efficient energy recovery for industrial firms and heat manufacturers. This aids climate goals, reduces fossil fuel reliance, and cuts costs.



© ECOP



Loc-Holz’s Timber Revolution

In Arbing, Upper Austria, a game-changer is taking root with the establishment of the region’s first cross-laminated timber plant. The innovative [Loc-Holz](#) production facility is set to redefine sustainable construction practices. As an added benefit, the plant has become a significant employer in the rural region, already creating 40 jobs and fostering economic growth.

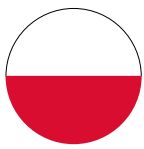
© LOC Holz

Guiding Carinthian SMEs towards Green Business Models

The [LOCA2Transformation](#) project in Carinthia is driving green business practices, especially in energy-intensive sectors, in line with the European Green Deal. Led by Alpen Adria University and Joanneum Research, the initiative offers SMEs in the chemical, mineral, metal production and paper and wood sectors guidance on navigating the path to a greener future. Through surveys, workshops, and a downloadable manual, researchers support SMEs in transitioning to climate-neutral operations.

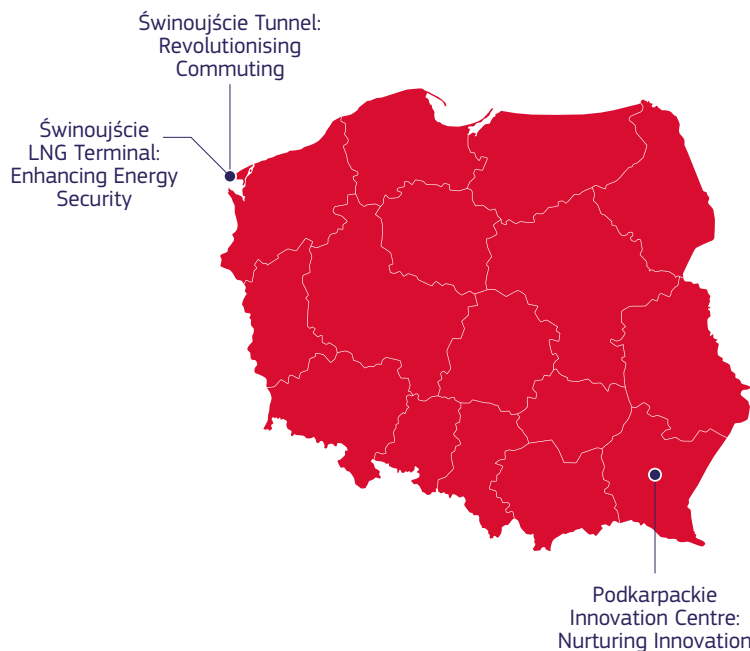


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Poland's Cohesion Policy has been instrumental in driving transformative developments across various sectors. With a focus on transportation, environmental conservation, SME support, energy security, and research and innovation, the country's 21 thematic and regional programmes have significantly reshaped the Polish landscape.

Cohesion Fund	€23 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€42 billion
European Social Fund	€12.9 billion



| Key Achievements



TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY
Construction and modernisation of around 2 000 km of railways and 3 000 km of expressways and motorways.



ENERGY SECURITY

- Addition of nearly 4 000 MW of new renewable energy capacity.
- Construction and modernisation of gas transmission pipelines.



SUPPORT FOR SMES
Targeted grants and subsidies stimulate innovation in over 100 000 SMEs.



RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- 1 188 full-time equivalent researchers benefitting from improved research infrastructure.
- Over €85 million in matched R&D funding.



NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY
Protection of almost 35 000 hectares of habitats.

Podkarpackie Innovation Centre: Nurturing Innovation

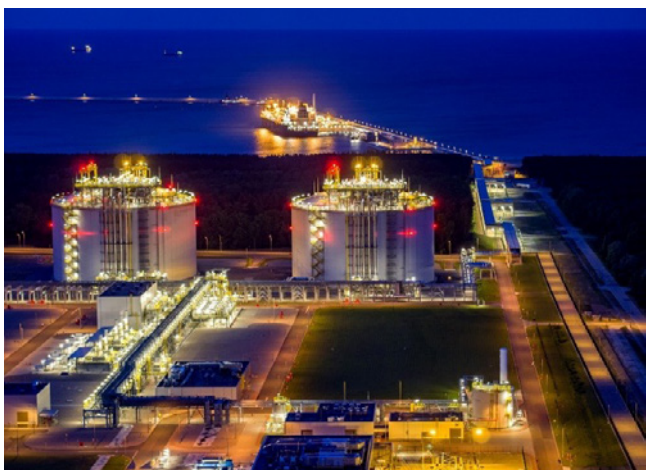
The Podkarpackie Innovation Centre (PIC) fosters collaboration between academia and industry, driving innovation and entrepreneurship. PIC supports projects across diverse sectors, from air pollution sensors to autonomous transport systems. Through state-of-the-art facilities and expert guidance, PIC empowers students and researchers to transform ideas into tangible solutions, catalysing regional development and enhancing Poland's innovation ecosystem.



© PCINN

Świnoujście Tunnel

The Świnoujście Tunnel is a game-changer for residents, cutting commute times between Świnoujście and Szczecin to a mere 2-3 minutes. With the city of Świnoujście drawing 2.5 million tourists annually, this tunnel not only enhances daily life but also boosts tourism accessibility. Spanning 1 440 meters, the tunnel fosters regional connectivity, spurring investments and job creation.



Świnoujście LNG Terminal: Enhancing Energy Security

The Świnoujście LNG Terminal bolsters Poland's energy security and diversifies natural gas supply sources. As the largest LNG facility in Northern and Central-Eastern Europe, it plays a pivotal role in the regasification of liquefied natural gas for distribution via pipelines. The terminal's regasification capacity will increase by 50% to 7.5 billion m³ per year, ensuring reliable and sustainable energy for Poland's future.



Portugal's Cohesion Policy has yielded remarkable results, driving economic growth, innovation, and environmental sustainability across the country. With a focus on boosting competitiveness and fostering entrepreneurship, the country's 12 regional and national thematic programmes have contributed to Portugal's environmental conservation efforts and helped create a resource-efficient economy.

Cohesion Fund	€2.8 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€12.7 billion
European Social Fund	€7.6 billion



| Key Achievements



JOB CREATION

Close to 45 000 new jobs generated.



BUSINESS-RESEARCH COOPERATION

- 720 enterprises engaged in collaboration with research institutions.
- 91 knowledge transfer projects supported.



HABITAT CONSERVATION

Preservation of over 188 000 hectares of habitats.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- Over 45 research and innovation institutes supported.
- More than 2 700 research projects, funded.



SME SUPPORT

- Over 1 700 enterprises supported in diversifying their product range.

Empowering Aeronautics Innovation at CEIIA

The CEIIA Aircraft project in Alentejo is set to soar with the development of a comprehensive aeronautical programme, from concept to industrialisation of new generation light aircraft. Through strategic collaboration with science and technology entities, this project is equipping CEIIA with cutting-edge infrastructure and information systems to foster an aeronautic cluster, drive innovation, and propel the region to new heights in aviation excellence.



© CCDP-N

Mercado do Bolhão Restoration

Mercado do Bolhão, a traditional market dating back to 1837, is a cornerstone of commerce in the heart of Porto. Since 1914, its distinctive building has been shaping the cityscape. Following a closure in 2018 for this extensive restoration project, the market has reclaimed its pivotal role in community life. The renovation has provided better infrastructure, including additional spaces for sellers and underground tunnels to supply the market, while consumers enjoy the new life brought to their old market.

Renewable Energy Storage in Azores: Powering Sustainable Solutions

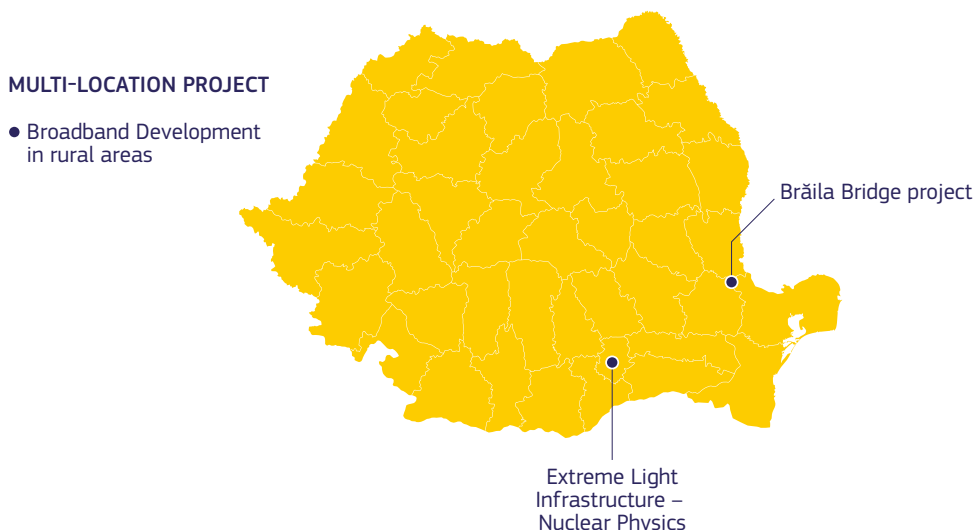
In Azores, the transition to renewable energy is gaining momentum with the construction of storage infrastructures on the largest islands. To continue to invest in the use of renewable energy sources, it is imperative to increase the efficiency of the penetration of renewable energy into the electricity grid, which means storing this energy at times when there is surplus, and to reduce the operational thermal groups needed to control the electricity grid. The projects involve creating storage facilities, optimising the utilisation of indigenous resources, and minimising energy waste, while ensuring sustainable supply without compromising consumption.





Cohesion Policy has been key in fostering development across various sectors in Romania. Through four thematic programmes, targeted interventions have been made to bolster digital transition, stimulate economic growth, enhance educational infrastructure, and modernise healthcare facilities.

Cohesion Fund	€6.5 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€12.4 billion
European Social Fund	€4.9 billion



Key Achievements



DIGITAL TRANSITION

99.2% of population have access to broadband internet.



EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- 53 000 children benefited from modernised kindergartens and schools.
- Over 46 000 university students enjoy upgraded infrastructure.



ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Over 50 000 new jobs created and nearly 22 000 existing jobs sustained through support to SMEs.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Energy efficiency improved in public buildings.
- 265 km of centralised district heating networks upgraded.
- Approximately 970 000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent avoided.

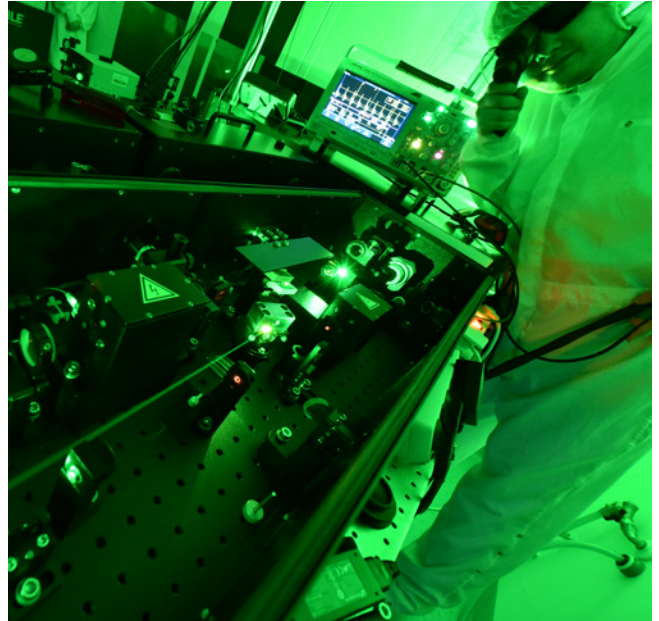


HEALTHCARE MODERNISATION

- 400 medical units upgraded.
- Over 1 100 new ambulances provided.

Extreme Light Infrastructure – Nuclear Physics

The ELI-NP project is part of a collaborative EU investment spanning Romania, Czechia, and Hungary. This initiative is establishing the world's premier laser research infrastructure, underpinned by the European Research Infrastructure Consortium ELI-ERIC. The project encompasses a 10 PW laser facility and laser-driven nuclear physics installations. It will strengthen European research capacities, fuel scientific collaboration, and enhance Romania's national R&I prowess.



Brăila Bridge

The ambitious Brăila Bridge project links the Black Sea ports to the Danube Delta. Stretching over two kilometres, this suspension marvel ranks as Romania's largest bridge and the third largest suspension bridge in the EU. It enhances connectivity within the country and streamlines international transit. Beyond facilitating trade and tourism, the bridge strengthens the region's socio-economic fabric while improving access to vital services for local communities.



© Gettyimages

Broadband Development

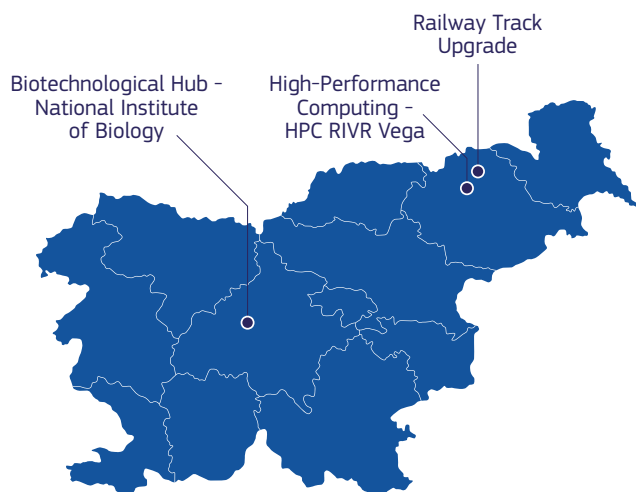
Spearheading Romania's digital evolution, Cohesion funding has brought about a monumental leap in broadband accessibility. Tailored interventions have bridged the digital divide, furnishing high-speed internet to over 250 000 households, 8 500 businesses, and 2 300 public institutions, predominantly in underserved rural areas. This initiative has narrowed the digital gap by securing broadband availability for over 99% of the country's population.



Pozdravljena,
Evropa!

Cohesion Policy programmes have seen Slovenia making significant strides in various sectors. These initiatives have targeted critical areas such as health-care, support for SMEs, research and development, transport infrastructure, sustainable mobility, and drinking water supply.

Cohesion Fund	€914 million
European Regional Development Fund	€1.7 billion
European Social Fund	€732 million



Key Achievements



HEALTHCARE DEVELOPMENT

395 improved medical rooms for Covid-19 treatment.



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- Opportunities created for over 1 100 new researchers.
- Establishment of more than 240 new partnerships between enterprises and research institutions.



SME SUPPORT

- Over 25 000 enterprises supported.
- More than 6 800 companies underwent digital transformation.
- 7 100 enterprises received business operations support.



DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

Improved access for approximately 200 000 inhabitants.



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

- Reconstruction of 21 km of railways.
- Creation of 350 km of cycling routes.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Almost 1 200 000 m² of public buildings renovated, resulting in 111 000 MWh decrease in annual energy consumption.
- 144 MW increase in renewable energy production.
- Energy poverty reduced in 400 low-income homes.

Railway Track Upgrade - Maribor to Šentilj

The railway track connecting [Maribor to Šentilj](#) has been upgraded to handle more trains, from 67 to 84 per day. However, this renovation not only about numbers; it's about safety, efficiency, and noise reduction. Also, travel times are shorter, and traffic management is more efficient, increasing the modal split in favour of eco-friendly rail transport.



Biotechnological Hub - National Institute of Biology

At the heart of Slovenia's scientific capacity lies the [Biotechnological Hub](#). This cutting-edge research infrastructure, offering state-of-the-art facilities for bioscience exploration, will revolutionise Slovenian research in the field. From medical biotechnology to environmental innovations, the Biotechnological Hub is a centre of collaboration, fostering partnerships with industry giants and nurturing interdisciplinary breakthroughs.

High-Performance Computing - HPC RIVR Vega

The HPC RIVR project has strengthened Slovenia's high-performance computing capacities, to meet the needs of Slovenian research and innovation.

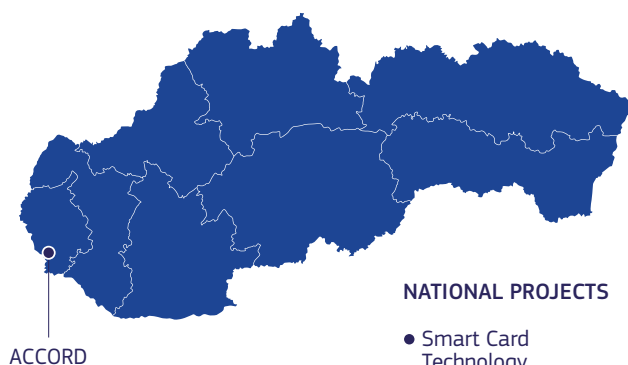
As the most powerful public supercomputer in Slovenia, HPC RIVR is a driver of innovation that helps Europe compete globally in strategic areas such as artificial intelligence, personalised medicine, bioengineering, the fight against climate change and the development of new materials.





In Slovakia, Cohesion Policy has made significant strides through six thematic programmes, targeting innovations in transport and connectivity, sustainable public services, energy efficiency, and adaptation to climate change. These programmes also promote cooperation between academia and business and aim to combat youth unemployment and help disadvantaged and marginalised groups integrate into society.

Cohesion Fund	€4 billion
European Regional Development Fund	€7.2 billion
European Social Fund	€2.96 billion



NATIONAL PROJECTS

- Smart Card Technology
- Support for Ukrainian Pupils

Key Achievements



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- Establishment of excellent R&D sites.
- Transfer of R&D knowledge into practical applications.
- Enhanced international cooperation projects.
- Improved medical technologies, medicines, and treatment options.



EGOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENTS

- Increased quality, standard, and availability of eGovernment services.
- Reduction in administrative burden and time for entrepreneurs and citizens.
- Elimination of redundant data submission requirements.



ENHANCED DATA MANAGEMENT

- Establishment of public data registers.
- Streamlining of processes and improved data access.



SME SUPPORT

- Shift from grants to financial instruments for SME support.
- Simplified access to services, finance, and new technologies.



COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Distribution of close to 4 million COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies.
- Loans to nearly 5 500 SMEs to overcome lockdown challenges.
- Support for 450 000 workers through short-time work schemes.



ACTION FOR REFUGEES

€315 million in emergency assistance to people fleeing Russian aggression in Ukraine.

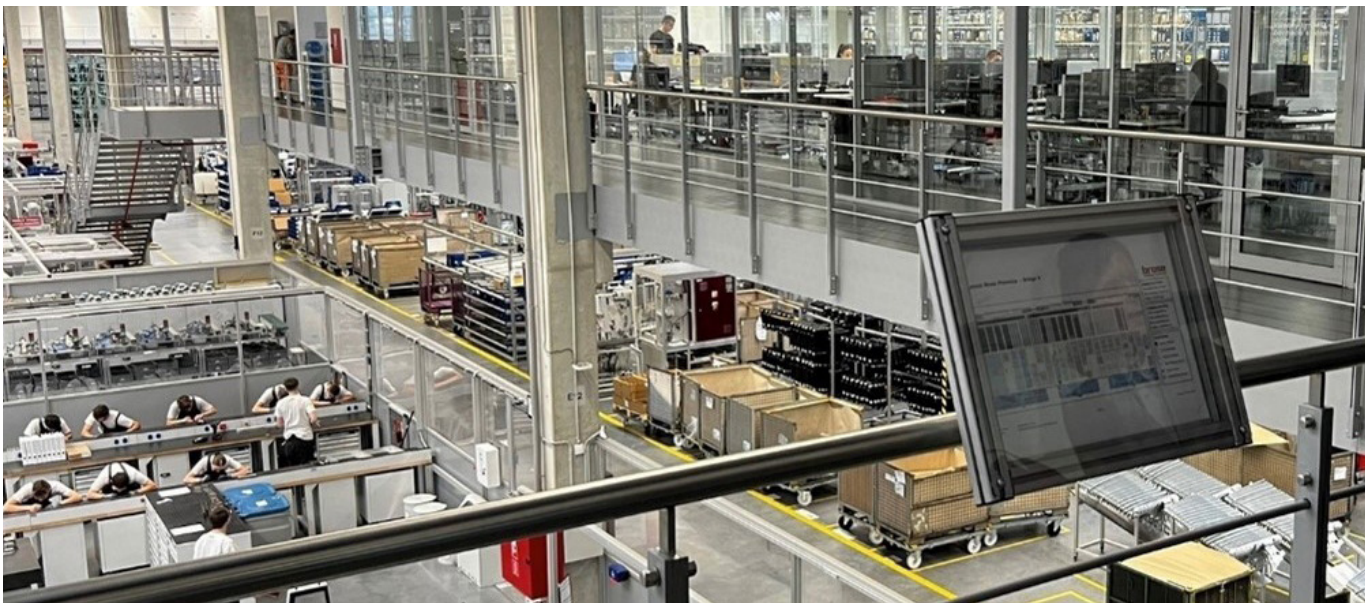


Smart Card Technology

Addressing digital security concerns, the “Revolutionary NFC microSD Smart Card technology” project developed OneCard, a highly secure card with versatile functionalities. From identity verification to e-government services, encryption, and storage of sensitive data, OneCard ensures the utmost security for critical applications. This innovative platform represents a significant leap towards building a secure digital society.

Advancing Pandemic Research

[ACCORD](#), or “Advancing University Capacity and Competence in Research, Development and Innovation” improved the research and innovation capacity at the Slovak University of Technology and the Comenius University. The project renovated buildings for energy efficiency and functionality, creating modern lecture halls and laboratories. A cutting-edge pavilion was also built, providing doctoral students with state-of-the-art facilities. As the universities can now attract more students and provide high profile workplaces, they can further strengthen their scientific capacity.



Support for Ukrainian Pupils

In a bid to aid refugee children’s integration into Slovak schools, this project, led by the National Coalition for Digital Skills and Vocations of the Slovak Republic, provided over 9 300 Ukrainian pupils with new digital devices. The initiative also facilitated language and digital skills testing for Ukrainian pupils, fostering their integration and academic success in Slovakia.





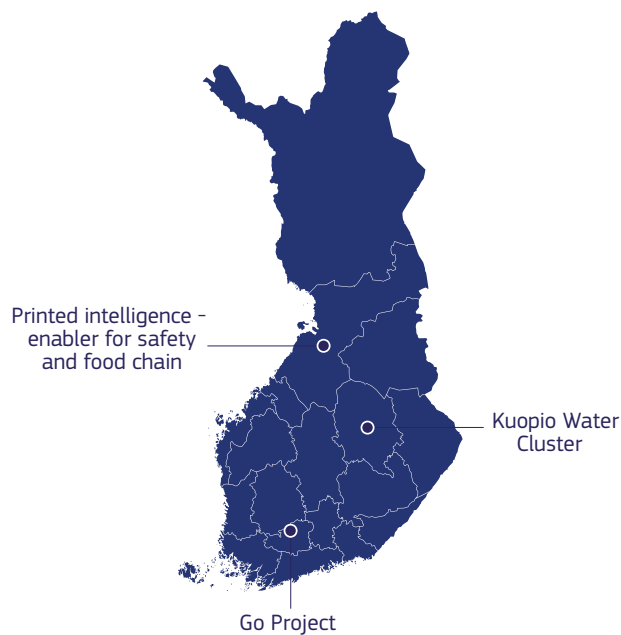
Finland's Cohesion Policy is delivered through three programmes aimed at enhancing SME competitiveness, fostering research and innovation, and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Notably, the Northern Sparsely Populated Area benefits from special allocations, while dedicated programmes support SMEs with financial guarantees.

European Regional Development Fund

€911 million

European Social Fund

€570 million



Key Achievements



ENTERPRISE SUPPORT

Financial assistance provided to 12 000 enterprises.



JOB CREATION

Creation of nearly 13 000 jobs.



LOW-CARBON TRANSITION

Increasing adoption of low-carbon practices in SMEs.



INNOVATION HUBS

Emergence and growth of regional innovation hubs.



R&D INVESTMENT

Strengthening of R&D investments through smart specialisation.



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Improved transport infrastructure unlocking business potential.



© Marc Sabat

Leading Innovation in Water Management

Kuopio Water Cluster is emerging as a powerhouse of water industry innovation in Northern Savo. The R&D factory has become a nucleus for testing and developing cutting-edge solutions in water purification, recycling, and management. Strategic investments have bolstered the Cluster's capabilities, ensuring it remains at the forefront of water technology advancement.

Revitalising Iittala

The Go Project has transformed Iittala's train station catalysing a surge in commuter numbers. This revamped hub, now safer and more functional, doubles as an art gallery, showcasing local craftsmanship to residents and visitors alike. Following an increase in commuter numbers, the national railway company added more train services to Iittala, enhancing connectivity for the entire community.



Improving Food Safety

In North Ostrobothnia, Printed Intelligence is pioneering a new era of food chain safety. Cutting-edge technological solutions are elevating food safety standards through structural electronics. This project is fostering a research environment dedicated to designing, manufacturing, and testing products that enhance food safety and self-sufficiency, while generating valuable scientific insights.



© Oulu University of Applied Sciences



Hej Europa!

In Sweden, Cohesion Policy has been deployed to address key challenges and opportunities across various sectors, fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainability while addressing specific regional needs. Key areas targeted include support for SMEs, investment in research and innovation, promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, as well as improvements in connectivity in the northernmost regions.

European Regional Development Fund

€1 billion

European Social Fund

€1.1 billion



Key Achievements



SUPPORT FOR SMES

Approximately 67 000 SMEs supported, adding over 12 000 full-time positions.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

72 722 tons of CO₂ equivalent avoided by supporting the development of SMEs.



RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

- 3 264 SMEs collaborated with research institutions.
- 1 221 enterprises brought new, innovative products to the market.



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

91 km of railway lines upgraded, enhancing connectivity and accessibility to markets in the northernmost regions.

Fossil-Free Municipalities in Skåne 2.0

Ten municipalities in Skåne county are collaborating to slash fossil fuel usage in electricity, heating, and transport. Through meticulous planning, they transitioned 700 fleet vehicles to biogas or electricity, improved energy efficiency in buildings, and promoted renewable energy sources. The project's success has sparked interest nationwide, with the project concept being replicated in several locations across Sweden.



Augmented Sports

At Mid Sweden University, the Augmented Sports project is driving innovation in Central Norrland's winter sports industry. By providing test arenas and fostering collaboration between over 60 companies and research teams, Augmented Sports is paving the way for a legacy of innovation in sports-related industries.



Malmö Innovation Arena

This collaborative project in Malmö brings together the public sector, industry, academia, and non-profit organisations to foster urban innovation. Through various initiatives such as dialogues, events, and creative methods like dance, communities are empowered to shape their urban environments and contribute to local prosperity.

Interreg programmes: Catalysing cooperation to improve lives

The European Union's Interreg programmes play a crucial role in supporting territorial cohesion and cooperation at regional and local level, building solidarity and trust and fostering EU identity across borders.

As part of the EU Cohesion Policy, over 100 Interreg programmes drive the sustainable development and progress of the EU's border regions.

37.5% of EU citizens living in regions with EU internal or external borders benefit, since 1990, from more than 50 cross-border cooperation programmes and policy work going beyond the Interreg funding, aiming at resolving obstacles created by national borders.

By encouraging local authorities, stakeholders, and citizens to share resources, knowledge and skills with neighbouring countries and regions, these programmes improve cohesion, overcome administrative barriers, celebrate shared culture and heritage, and turn mutual challenges in a variety of fields into opportunities.



€9.4 billion - total budget for Interreg (EU contribution)



60 cross-border programmes improving citizens' lives with more and better opportunities and access to services across internal EU borders.



15 transnational cooperation programmes to tackle common challenges and share good practices among countries in the same geographical area in Europe.



4 interregional cooperation programmes that foster capacity building and cooperation between urban areas and regions, across the European continent.



10 cooperation programmes with accession countries.



15 cooperation programmes between EU and neighbouring countries sharing a land border or sea crossing¹.



6 of these Interreg programmes involve the **EU Outermost Regions** with their neighbourhood.

1. Cooperation with Russia and Belarus has been discontinued and affected projects have been completed only on the EU side.

Coordinating emergency responses

ARIEM+ has enhanced cooperation between emergency services so that border regions can mutually manage resources for climate change-induced emergencies like forest fires and floods. Through a Cross-Border Emergencies Plan and a Single Operational Command Network, it shares resources including drones and communication systems, to ensure a more coordinated response overcoming administrative barriers and language differences. Through joint training, the project optimises emergency services, resulting in quicker response times and more lives saved.

Project partners from: Spain and Portugal.



Embracing the circular economy

BeCircular boosted employment through entrepreneurship in the circular economy. It established centres for circular economy, bioeconomy, entrepreneurship, and creativity, where it promoted sustainability, training, and innovative waste solutions through cross sectoral collaboration. The project established circular economy platforms, created jobs, and trained over 300 young people.

Participating countries: Greece and the Republic of North Macedonia.



© Diadyma

Propelling shared heritage

The Cycling Route around the Tatras project has made tourism, tradition, and sustainable development in the Tatras border regions of Poland and Slovakia more dynamic. The programme has created a 250-kilometre loop for biking, skiing, and running in the Tatras, featuring cycle paths, parking facilities and rest areas. It offers a scenic journey into the region's cultural, historical, and natural heritage, supporting local businesses, sharing folklore, and raising environmental awareness.

Participating countries: Poland and Slovakia.



© EGTC Tatry

Mobilising sustainable winter tourism

Winter tourism is a vital resource for most Alpine valleys. Deeply affected by the consequences of climate change, this economic activity calls for adaptation and mitigation strategies, and guidance for field actions to reduce energy consumption and carbon footprint. The Interreg Smart Altitude project tested and documented efficient technical solutions in four living labs, implemented a decision-making process for ski operators and policy makers, and built a replication network of 26 ski resorts across the Alps.

Project partners from: France, Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.



Pioneering sustainable practices on the big screen

Green Screen put the film industry in the spotlight by establishing sustainable practices. The partnership supplied renewable energy to film productions and developed an online tool for productions to evaluate and eventually reduce their environmental impact.

Project partners from: UK, Belgium, Spain, France, Romania, and Sweden.

**NO PLANET.
NO FILM.**

**PROTECT AND SAVE
OUR ONLY SHOOTING LOCATION.**

Towards a tox-free Baltic Sea region

The NonHazCity project successfully guided cities around the Baltic Sea on avoiding hazardous substances and fostering a toxin-free lifestyle. With over 62% of the EU's surface waters contaminated, the project addressed public administrations, businesses, and citizens. It raised awareness and provided urban detoxification packages to create toxin-free environments while safeguarding water and soil health.

Project partners from: Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden.



Powering youth employment in Mediterranean ports

The YEP MED project boosted youth employment by training 4 650 young people and securing 420 jobs in sectors like foreign trade, environment, sustainability, digitisation, and port logistics. Through innovative dual technical and vocational education and training YEP MED addressed skill shortages, developed new curricula, and fostered partnerships between educational institutions and businesses.

Project partners from: Spain, Egypt, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.



Sharing unspoken ties

The Cultural Route of Becharac and Ganga project united Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina through their shared intangible cultural heritage. The project revitalised local traditions and promoted sustainable tourism based on UNESCO-protected folk songs: Becharac and Ganga. The towns of Pleternica and Tomislavgrad established cultural tourist routes, leading to the construction of town squares and museums named after the songs and provided tourism management training.

Project partners from: Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina



Towards trilateral biodiversity in the Plateau des Guyanes

The Guiana Plateau is more than a tropical wetland forest. Maintaining its vital ecosystem is of global importance. In the RenfoR sAP project, the partners addressed identified challenges - ecotourism, nature management, and illegal gold mining - by implementing collaborative solutions that focus on biodiversity and sustainable local development.

Project partners from: French Guiana, Suriname, and Guyana.



Advancing Water Desalination Technology

DESAL+ has established a Macaronesia platform for research in water desalination and the water-energy nexus. The project enhanced scientific performance, focusing on joint R&D strategy, applied research, and demonstrative solutions for desalination technologies. It installed autonomous solar-powered desalination plants in Maio Island and mobile plants in Mauritania and made specific improvements in the sea water supply in the Canary Islands, optimising energy consumption using photovoltaic solar energy.

Project partners from: Cabo Verde, Canarias, Madeira, and Mauritania.



Assessing the vulnerability of the Black Sea marine ecosystem to human pressures

The Anemone project focused the changes of the Black Sea ecosystem, that indicate that its marine resources have declined due to over-fishing, eutrophication, unplanned development of coastal zones and intense maritime traffic. With innovative technologies a compatible and open pool of data the project contributed to a better understanding of the human-induced changes in the Black Sea ecosystem.

Project partners from: Ukraine, Turkey, and Romania



Nova Gorica and Gorizia come together – New European Capital of Culture 2025

GO! BORDERLESSS is a tale where past memories and future visions blend to create a concrete, participative and effective cultural strategy bringing together the peoples of northern Italy and Slovenia. The successful GO! 2025 joint application set itself the ambitious goal of becoming a cross-border European Capital of Culture. The people of Nova Gorica and Gorizia, while recognising the deep divisions of the past, seek to improve the quality of life for all citizens of the whole border area.

EU Macro-Regional Strategies: Turning common challenges into joint opportunities

EU macro-regional strategies are frameworks that facilitate cooperation among closely connected areas. They address common challenges and identify opportunities enabling EU and non-EU countries within a defined geographical area to jointly tackle issues efficiently across borders, sectors, and governance levels.

Four EU macro-regional strategies connect multiple EU Member States and their non-EU neighbours, actively engaging stakeholders to ensure inclusive governance and effective implementation.

EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

Uniting five EU Member States and two non-EU countries and building a stronger connection between metropolitan, peri-mountain, and mountain areas, this strategy enhances competitiveness and promotes sustainable mobility, resource management, and natural and cultural heritage.

- Coordinated investments in hydrogen to boost sustainable mobility and develop jobs and skills for the sector.
- Youth.Shaping.EUSALP initiative launched to allow young people to be involved in the strategy's governance structures and in concrete projects

Participating countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.



EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

In a region stretching from Lapland to Germany and Poland, uniting eight EU Member States, the strategy focuses on saving the sea, connecting the region, and increasing prosperity around the Baltic Sea.

- Increased cooperation and integration through initiatives like the “Baltic Science Network” that strengthens research and innovation capacities in the region.
- Promoting sustainable development and environmental protection through projects such as “Baltic Blue Growth”, which supports sustainable aquaculture, blue biotechnology, and maritime spatial planning, and DAIMON, which helps deal with dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea.

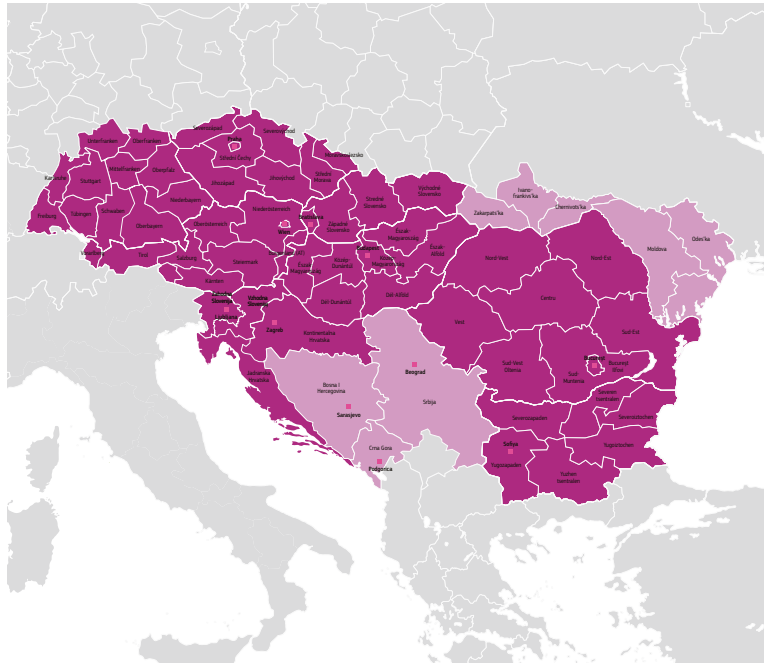
Participating countries: Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland.

EU Strategy for the Danube Region

This strategy brings together 14 countries in a region that is home to 115 million people. It brings together a range of entities all the way from the Black Forest to the Black Sea to cooperate on challenges like flooding, transport and energy links, environmental protection, and challenges to security - all of which demand a united approach.

- Red tape cut in the shipping industry by way of harmonised and digitalised document control.
- Increased safety for cyclists by raising the capacities of all stakeholders to build and improve safe bicycle infrastructure through the Sabrina project.
- Integration of Ukrainian refugees and establishing safe corridors for freight.

Participating countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, and Ukraine.



EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

Encompassing 10 countries – four EU Member States, five candidate countries, and one third country – around the two seas, this strategy focuses on making the most of the region's potential in the areas of blue growth, environmental protection, and sustainable tourism.

- Contributes to maintaining regular political exchanges, and aligning EU priorities in the Western Balkans region.
- Developed a common mechanism to safeguard the Adriatic basin in case of oil spills, including carrying out the first joint full-scale transnational anti-pollution exercise.

Participating countries: Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, the Republic of North Macedonia, and San Marino.



Urban Innovative Actions

The Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) were launched in 2015 as a brand new initiative aimed at supporting European cities to test new solutions to urban challenges and to inspire and scale them up within the wider Cohesion Policy.

With topics ranging from energy transition to housing or jobs and skills in local economies, its legacy represents a set of 86 pilot projects located in cities of all sizes in 19 Member States and the UK, for a total investment of €368.5 million.

Revitalising city landscapes

To improve living conditions and support sustainability goals, the city of Ghent introduced the ICCARus housing renovation scheme for vulnerable homeowners. Powered by a pioneering *recurring fund*, it completed 82 renovations and reinvested in a further 200 homes to combat energy poverty while engaging citizens in a participatory co-design process.



Bridging the skills gap

The NextGen microcities project in the Latvian cities of Ventspils and Valmiera cultivated skills and knowledge, spurring job creation and strengthening economic resilience. By implementing innovative career guidance strategies and attracting talent, these projects revitalised the local economy, with 100 new residents employed in

the ICT sector, eight new foreign direct investment (FDI) registrations, and the creation of 251 jobs in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).



Cultivating collaborative ecosystems

In Bilbao, the AS-Fabrik initiative kick-started strategic collaborations and capacity-building initiatives between academia, businesses, and local service providers. Through knowledge intensive business services (KIBS), it cultivated talent, delivered mentoring and fostered a conducive ecosystem for business development and entrepreneurship. The project created 120 specialised jobs and revamped the AS-Fabrik building, offering 11 fully equipped spaces for future collaboration.



Building back better

The EU's Crisis Instruments channelled through Cohesion Policy have provided essential support in post-pandemic recovery and mitigating the repercussions of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine.

With many of its 2014-2020 programmes in full implementation phase when COVID-19 hit, the Member States were able to redirect funds to address the crisis and subsequent challenges.

Since 2020, the European Commission has initiated a series of crisis response mechanisms.

- The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII/CRII+)
- The Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe package (REACT-EU)
- Initiatives like Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE and FAST-CARE)
- The Supporting Affordable Energy Initiative (SAFE)
- The Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform initiative (STEP)

Together, these instruments have demonstrated the EU's commitment to swift and effective action in times of adversity, laying the groundwork for a more resilient and prepared Europe.

Support where it counts

The CRII & CRII+ initiatives offered assistance worth €24 billion in the areas where it was needed the most during the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of the investments was in health sector to secure protective equipment, expand testing capacity and strengthen hospital resources. In business sector, the funds were used to provide capital to SMEs and promoting digitalisation, for example. Member States were also able to implement employment retention schemes and support vulnerable groups.

With the CARE instruments the Member States provided around €1.7 billion of emergency support to ensuring access to basic necessities, such as temporary accommodation, food and water supplies or medical care, for those displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. Apart from that, they

provide additional liquidity worth €13.6 billion, flexibility and simplification for Member States.

SAFE, a component of the RePowerEU initiative, supported with around €4 billion vulnerable households and SMEs in 11 Member States impacted by high energy costs caused by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, while also funding short-term work schemes to preserve employment.

“Together, these instruments have demonstrated the EU's commitment to swift and effective action in times of adversity.”

From crisis to opportunity

The REACT-EU initiative supported sustainable, long-term recovery from the economic and social effects of the pandemic. The additional €50 billion was invested in the regions on green and digital transitions, healthcare, business support, and infrastructure and public services to safeguard the future of Europeans.

For Cohesion Policy, STEP will continue the path from necessary immediate crisis response to a sustainable long-term path for strategic investments. Ensuring optimal use of the remaining funds, it supports investments in digital technologies, clean and resource efficient technologies and biotechnologies. It also includes support for necessary skills.



EU Solidarity Fund

The European Union Solidarity Fund's (EUSF) mission is to bring relief to countries, regions and citizens hit by natural disasters. Committed to providing longer-term financial assistance in the wake of natural disasters, the Fund has evolved into a cornerstone of EU post-disaster recovery efforts, and a concrete expression of EU solidarity with existing and aspiring EU Member States.

From 2014 to 2020, the EUSF mobilised over €3.3 billion to address 42 natural disaster events in 16 Member States, the UK and Serbia. The Fund's interventions eased recovery from floods, forest fires, health emergencies, storms, earthquakes, and adverse weather conditions.

Strengthening disaster recovery efforts



Earthquake recovery in Croatia

Croatia received over €1 billion in financial assistance from the EUSF following severe earthquakes in 2020 and 2021. With this support, Croatia has carried out renovation works on 18 hospitals, 56 other healthcare institutions, 156 schools and kindergartens, 26 faculties, 250 cultural and heritage buildings, 100 km of public water supply and drainage networks, over 600 km of roads, 77 bridges, 40 culverts, 6 km of tram tracks, and 4 railway structures. A total of 10 500 construction workers were involved in this extensive reconstruction effort.

Flooding in France

In October 2020, devastating floods struck the French alpine valleys, causing extensive damage to infrastructure. France received €59.3 million from the EUSF, which was instrumental in restoring water, transportation, and road networks in the affected regions.



Reconstruction in Serbia

Serbia grappled with unprecedented flooding in May 2014, leading to substantial damage in public and private infrastructure. With €60 million from the EUSF, authorities carried out a comprehensive reconstruction effort, including 34 schools, 2 day-care centres, 12 health centres and 11 outpatient care clinics.



“From 2014 to 2020, the EUSF mobilised over €3.3 billion to address 42 natural disaster events in 16 Member States, the UK and Serbia.”

20 years together

2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the European Union's biggest enlargement in its history. On 1 May 2004, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the EU.

Over the past two decades, the Cohesion Policy has supported the integration and sustainable growth of these Member States. Through thousands of projects it has, amongst others, improved infrastructure and access to public services, strengthened human capital, and fostered innovation to ensure a better quality of life across the board.

The average GDP per capita in the Member States that joined the EU in 2004 grew from around 60% of the EU average in 2004 to nearly 80% in 2023. At the same time, unemployment rates dropped from an average of 14.5% to 3.5% over this period. Furthermore, productivity spurred in Central and Eastern Europe, where it has grown three times as fast as the EU average over the past 20 years. This remarkable growth cycle, which helped the then 'new' Member States to integrate into the single market, was driven in part by direct support to investments from the Cohesion Policy. While the then 'old' Member States benefitted from an enlarged market for export, and spill-over effects of Cohesion investments.



This economic growth has been accompanied by tangible social progress, including better health outcomes, rising employment, and reduced poverty rates across almost all these regions in the past decade.

“Over the past two decades, the Cohesion Policy has supported the integration and sustainable growth of these Member States.”

The integration of the 10 Member States into Interreg cross-border cooperation has brought communities together to build greater trust and solidarity and heal divisions and legacies of the past that span more than 40 years. Inspiring evidence of this can be seen in the outcomes of Interreg support for the development of border twin cities such as Gorizia, Italy – Nova Gorica, Slovenia; Slubice, Poland – Frankfurt Oder, Germany; or Cieszyn, Poland – Český Těšín, Czechia.



Territorial approaches: Empowering integrated development

In the 2014-2020 period, the Cohesion Policy offered Member States new opportunities to leverage funding for territorial strategies, particularly in urban context, but also in non-urban areas. The strategies follow a place-based and multi-stakeholder approach to harness local knowledge and resources for sustainable growth and wellbeing.

Altogether, almost 2.000 integrated territorial strategies were developed. The strategies which focused on urban areas tackled diverse and interlinked challenges such as climate change adaptation, urban regeneration and sustainable urban mobility. Most of the non-urban strategies intended to develop the endogenous potential of different types of territories to address demographic and natural challenges such as unequal access to public services.

• Sustainable Urban Development (SUD)

With over two-thirds of the EU population residing in urban areas, sustainable urban development is crucial. SUD strategies prioritise environmental, economic, and social dimensions, fostering partnerships and addressing pressing urban challenges.

More than 900 cities were supported with €17 billion to design and manage their integrated strategies and thus propel their sustainable urban development.

• Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)

ITI emerged as a versatile tool for the regional and local authorities to make use of the investment opportunities provided by Cohesion Policy, enabling to address various functional areas including urban, rural, rural-urban cooperation, mountainous and island regions, and cross-border regions. Targeting specific territories, ITI facilitates multi-sectoral and tailored interventions that align with local needs and priorities.

• Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)

CLLD empowers communities to address territorial and local challenges through bottom-up and participative implementation of Cohesion Policy. This approach nurtures local innovation, entrepreneurship, and community ownership, driving local development initiatives.

Open, smart services in cities



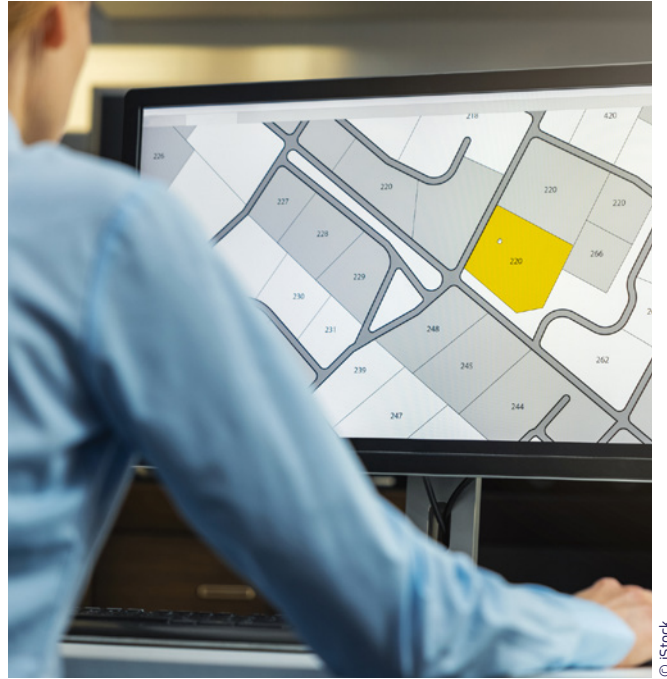
In Finland, the six largest cities came together to solve common challenges and foster economic development under the Six City Strategy. The strategy built on an innovation ecosystem and solution-oriented approach, in which the network of the cities was considered a unique marketplace for developing innovative solutions proposed by companies and R&D organisations.

By fostering open innovation platforms, data accessibility, and citizen engagement, the strategy has driven economic competitiveness and enhanced urban infrastructure and services.

Turning the tide with innovation strategy

The Fundão Innovation Plan in Portugal has addressed the municipality's population decline and economic stagnation through diversification of the local economy with the goal of making it fit for the digital era. Having kick-started a collaboration among public and private stakeholders, Fundão focused on education and training, IT technology, R&D and Agriculture.

As a result of the strategy, Fundão has been able to create an innovation ecosystem that has attracted 16 IT companies, created 1000 qualified jobs in the digital sector and over 80 start-ups, and supports 250 private investment projects. Fundão registers today a positive migratory balance and people from 63 different nationalities call it home.



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Steering sustainable urban mobility

URBACT is an EU programme that encourages European cities to work together to develop solutions to urban challenges and share good practices, lessons and solutions with all stakeholders involved in urban policy.

The municipality of Slatina, Romania has been developing a long-term strategy to clear up the city's roads and encourage public transport use. Thanks to participation in URBACT CityMobilNet network, they formed a local group to finalise their Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan and received EU funding to build a fleet of hybrid buses.



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Financial Instruments: Boosting growth and development

Financial instruments (FIs) are powerful tools for driving investment and fostering growth. Set-up by Member States and regions, these instruments leverage EU Cohesion Policy resources to support projects through financial products like loans, guarantees, and equity.

Financial instruments help to deliver economic, social, and territorial cohesion, whilst addressing market gaps in the financial markets. They play a unique role in bringing financial sustainability and ensuring that projects and investments bring long-lasting effects in key areas from SME support to European Green Deal and research and innovation efforts.

As alternatives to grants, financial instruments offer three main benefits:

- **Leverage Effect:** Financial instrument attract public and private sector resources, multiplying available

financing. By the end of 2022, they had leveraged €62 billion in investments towards EU policy objectives, multiplying the EU resources by 4.

- **High Spill-off Impact:** Implemented by financial intermediaries with market expertise, FIs help in building capacity in public authorities and improving the quality of projects, thus maximising their impact.
- **Revolving Effect:** Since the support from financial instruments is paid back, it is possible to reinvest the funds, to local initiatives that work achieving EU objectives.

Most of the support, 66%, went to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) during the 2014-2020 period. Altogether 665 000 SMEs, of which 502 500 qualified as microenterprises were supported. With the financial instruments, SMEs were also able to go through challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Spearheading the green revolution

Supported by venture capital, and backed by ERDF resources, Berlin Start-up Nuventura is pioneering sustainable switchgear – key hardware components omnipresent in electrical grids. Their solution substitutes sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆), the world's strongest greenhouse gas, with dry air. Fuelling Nuventura's momentum, governments worldwide, including the EU, have set ambitious targets to phase out the use of SF₆ in switchgear by 2030.



A driving force for change

Through the i-Run by BFC financing solution, Emmanuel Lear switched career tracks and established the first open-air karting track in St Pierre, La Réunion. He has also taken sustainability to a new level by introducing thermal and electric karts to his circuits.



© Emmanuel Lear, Karting 974

Keeping a family business alive

With a loan facilitated by BNP Paribas under the ERDF co-financed Biznesmax guarantee, Huras – a globally active, family-run machinery manufacturer in Poland, survived and even thrived during challenging times.



© Huras

Advancing peace and reconciliation: PEACE IV Programme

The EU PEACE programme is a unique Cohesion Policy programme dedicated to supporting the progress of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border regions of Ireland. By fostering understanding and dialogue through targeted interventions and collaboration, the PEACE programme brought about positive changes among divided communities and has laid the groundwork for a more inclusive society.

In 2014-2020 the PEACE programme promoted social cohesion, positive community relations and as well as economic stability in the region with projects supported by almost €230 000 000 in EU funding.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Shared education

Shared Education initiatives bring students together with the aim to help them form positive and effective relationships with others from different backgrounds.



More than **2 400 teachers** received facilitation training in nearly **500 schools**



More than **7 800 marginalised youths** aged 14 to 24 developed soft skills and understanding of diversity.



Over **120 000 participants** in shared education classrooms. Participating students have reported positive attitudinal change resulting in improved relationships between Protestants and Catholics.

Shared spaces and services



17 local initiatives facilitated direct engagement and addressed the lack of cross community interactions.

There was sustained usage of public areas and buildings as shared spaces.



7 capital developments to create new shared spaces.

Victims and survivors



Over 3 900 individuals received advocacy support to overcome the legacy of the past.

Building positive relations



Increased tolerance, community cohesion and positive changes in attitude between divided communities both at local and regional level.



Shankill Shared Women’s Centre

The Shared Women’s Centre is a neutral space which was built for cross community contact for women and their families in North/West Belfast. It builds on work by the Shankill Women’s Centre with women, children, and young families in interface areas. A collaboration between local authorities and associations, the new centre provides a place to build connection while reducing intra-community tensions.

Collaboration and Sharing in Education project (CASE)

The project fostered good relations among children and young people. It brought children and teachers from all backgrounds closer together in school-based settings. The participating schools promoted community cohesion, enhanced educational opportunities for all pupils and provided shared professional development.

Youthscape

More than 800 young people aged 14-24 took part in the cross-border programme with a ‘person-centred’ approach to learning. Each participant was assigned a dedicated youth worker at the outset to help ease them into a group setting. A typical week for participants included day trips, group work, studying for an accredited qualification in vocational studies and one-to-one mentoring. Music, sports, cooking workshops and art activities formed part of the project.



Supporting people in the EU's outermost regions

The EU is striving for inclusive growth and prosperity for all its citizens irrespective of where they live.

The EU counts nine outermost regions – the most remote parts of the Union: French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, Réunion Island and Saint-Martin (France), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and the Canary Islands (Spain). These regions are in the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, South America, and the Indian Ocean, and are home to close to 5 million EU citizens.

Since 2004, the European Commission has developed strategic orientations for outermost regions to address their specific constraints and challenges. These strategies aim at enhancing living conditions, supporting recovery and resilience, and fostering sustainable and inclusive growth. The most recent strategy, adopted in 2022, places a strong focus on creating opportunities for people in these regions in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

The European Regional Development (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and REACT-EU played an important role in this regard and have invested €8.8 billion in these regions for the period 2014-2020.

Tailored solutions

Cohesion Policy has supported the outermost regions in a wide range of sectors: health, education, water, or transport infrastructure, local production, agriculture, fisheries, innovation, energy efficiency and biodiversity protection.

For example, Cohesion Policy supported:

- a major energy power plant in Madeira;
- la Nouvelle Route du Littoral and the new terminal of Roland Garros airport in Réunion;
- a public transport system in Martinique;
- airport infrastructure and a hydroelectric storage plant in the Canary Islands;
- the first 100% renewable biorefinery in Gran Canaria;
- the first hospital in Mayotte;
- a follow-up care and rehabilitation facility for children in French Guiana;
- 3 000 enterprises and 1 200 full time jobs in the Azores.

ERDF also encouraged co-operation with neighbouring countries via the Interreg programmes such as

- protecting the Guiana Plateau in French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname, one of the world's largest tropical wetlands;
- and increasing knowledge on desalination in Canary Islands, Madeira, Cabo Verde, and Mauritania.



