

# UNBOXING THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK



2021 - 2027



**Authors:**

**Agnese Pantaloni**, AER European Projects Coordinator; **Anna Comacchio**, AER European Projects and Policy Officer; **Birgit Sandu**, AER European Projects Manager; **Mirthe Vogd**, AER European Projects Assistant

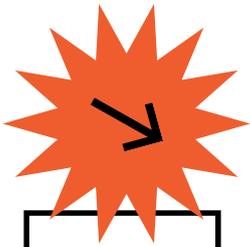
**Brussels (BE), April 2022**

**ISBN: 978-2-9579590-2-0**

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **I** INTRODUCTION

*About the Assembly of European Regions*  
*About the Skillnet Project*

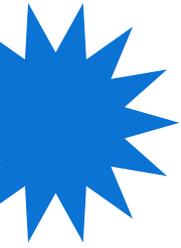
---

## **01** COHESION POLICY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

- 1.1. Cohesion Funds (CF)*
  - 1.2 European Regional Development Funds (ERDF)*
    - 1.2.1. European territorial cooperation*
  - 1.3 European Social Fund (ESF+)*
  - 1.4 Just Transition Fund (JTF)*
  - 1.5 European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARFD)*
- 

## **02** DIRECT GRANT FUNDING PROGRAMMES

- 2.1 Erasmus+*
  - 2.2 Horizon Europe*
  - 2.3 Creative Europe*
  - 2.4 Digital Europe*
  - 2.5 LIFE*
  - 2.6 Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)*
  - 2.7 Single Market Programme*
  - 2.8 EU4Health*
  - 2.9 Justice, Rights and Values Fund*
  - 2.10 Connecting Europe Facility (Digital, Energy and Transport)*
-



## **03** EU TOOLS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING

- 3.1 Roadmaps for administrative capacity building - Practical Toolkit*
  - 3.2 Self-assessment instruments for Managing Authorities*
  - 3.3 Competency Framework*
  - 3.4 Taiex-Regio Peer2Peer*
  - 3.5 REGIO Peer2Peer Communities*
  - 3.6 ESF Transnational Cooperation Platform*
  - 3.7 JASPERS-Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions*
  - 3.8 Competence Centre for Social Innovation*
  - 3.9 EU Funds Anti-Fraud Knowledge and Resource Centre*
  - 3.10 Training on Cohesion Policy*
  - 3.11 Integrity Pacts*
  - 3.12 Arachne*
-



# INTRODUCTION

On 17 December 2020, after months of painstaking inter-institutional negotiations against the backdrop of a global pandemic, the European Union adopted the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), its long-term budget for 2021-2027.

Together with the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument, the MFF represents an unprecedented **€1.8 trillion of funding to support Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic** and the EU's long-term priorities across different policy areas. It is therefore essential that Europe's regions get training with these instruments to ensure a robust and sustainable recovery.

This booklet aims to give an overview of the content presented in the training session (comprised of 3 webinars) held by the AER on the new funding programmes under the MFF 2021-2027 in 2021-2022.

It give a **strategic overview on on the different EU funding programmes and instruction on who and how one can access these funds**. Lastly, information is presented on EU tools to support administrative capacity building to access EU funds, giving a selected overview of tools provided by the Commission for regional and national authorities managing and implementing structural funds.

This training session was organised as part of the **Skillnet Project, which is funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Commission**. The training session helps regions to make the most of the MFF and NextGenerationEU Package.

Featuring insights from experts at the European Commission, the three webinars give regions guidance on how to plan initiatives and projects that can benefit from the different funds.

The webinars introduced the main sources of EU funding within the **MMF 2021-2027** following the macro division between indirect funding (managed by national and regional administrators) and direct funding (managed directly by the EU Commission and Agencies provided in the form of contracts and grants), and, furthermore, introduced **tools developed by the EU Commission for supporting administrative capacity building**.

Considering the COVID-19 crisis that Europe is currently facing, an overview of the new measures within the MFF 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU is crucial to address this exceptional situation as a transversal topic among the webinars.

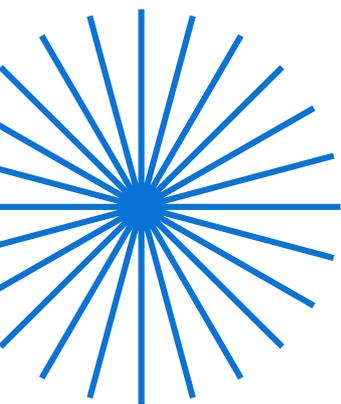
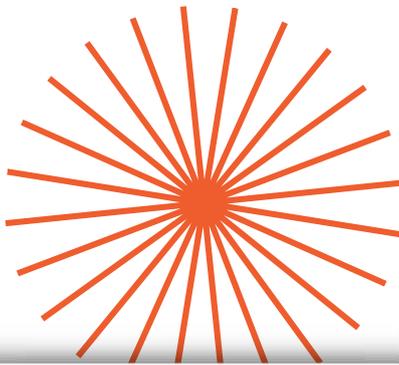
ABOUT

# THE ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS

**The Assembly of European Regions (AER)**, the largest independent network of Regions in the wider Europe established in 1985, followed closely the negotiations on the MFF 2021-2027 and advocated for a stronger role of European regions and cohesion programmes and funds. With negotiations on the new budget at the final stage, it is a concern of the AER to share the activities performed at advocacy level with all member regions with the aim to guide them towards the new funding, regulations, programmes and procedures for the period 2021-2027.

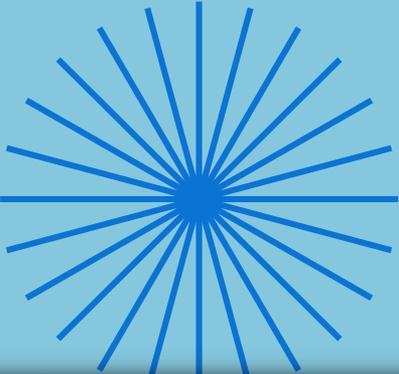
In 2018 the AER has produced a **'Statement on the European Commission Proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework'** that outlines 10 key points that the European institutions & national governments should take on board.

In order to move from the political to the operational level, a series of webinars have been organised by the AER Secretariat in collaboration with Skillnet, and aimed at providing an overview on the EU funding system and programmes of the 2021-2027 budgetary period most relevant for regional authorities as well as to guide them on how to plan initiatives and projects that can benefit from the different funds. This is a joint action led by the AER Advocacy and Project Unit, to foster synergies and a more integrated cooperation between AER internal bodies and therefore offer better services to member regions, in accordance with the revised AER structure.

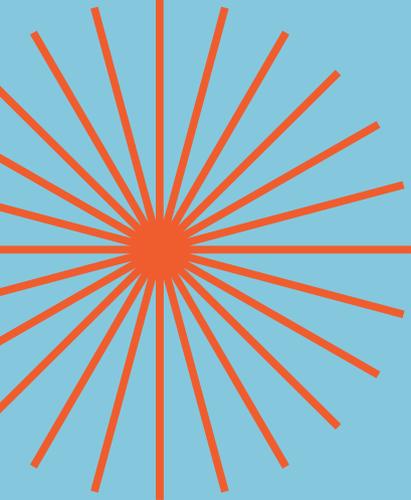


ABOUT

# THE SKILLNET PROJECT



**SKILLNET** comes from the identification of challenges and problems for VET systems such as the globalisation and internationalisation of the economies and job markets, and the transformation towards an information and knowledge-based society. Indeed, in many regions, one of the main challenges is the **skills mismatch between the industry and the workforce**, which this project aims to address. Another issue is a lack of a broad involvement and capacity of the various VET systems components in charge to address the societal objectives like the prevention of unemployment, inappropriate employment and the exclusion of the disadvantaged communities.



The project's specific objectives are to establish and reinforce cross-network collaboration and cross-border networking and partnerships capacity of VET providers, public authorities and policymakers, build their effective presence at a policy level, ensure the effective implementation of EU programmes, initiatives and priorities within VET, promote European Qualifications Framework principles and work-based learning involving public authorities, policymakers, social partners, companies and VET providers while stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship.

To learn more about activities and opportunities within the Skillnet Project, visit the AER dedicated **Partnerships in Focus Hub** at [aer.eu](http://aer.eu).

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union





# 1. COHESION POLICY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS



Cohesion policy is the European Union's main tool to pursue the **balanced economic and social wellbeing of its regions and cities**. To this aim, the EU supports projects and initiatives that have a direct impact on people's daily lives, ranging from transport, healthcare, employment, business competitiveness, communication, to leisure activities and community life, hence **"embodying the most tangible manifestation of the EU on the ground"**\*. As such, the policy provides both the governance structure and the financial support needed for achieving several of the EU's priorities for 2019–2024, and its specific policy objectives:

- A **more competitive and smarter Europe** (innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity) = ERDF;
- A **greener, low-carbon** transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient **Europe** (including energy transition, green and blue investment, circular economy, climate change mitigation and risk management) = ERDF and CF;
- A **more connected Europe** (enhanced mobility) = ERDF and CF;
- A more social and inclusive Europe (the European pillar of social rights) = ESF+ and ERDF;
- A **Europe closer to citizens** (bottom up approach endorsed, by empowering cities and local communities to identify their own priorities and projects in a participatory way);
- + Capacity building and cooperation with partners within and outside of member states – horizontal priorities in all specific objectives.

Cohesion Policy is delivered through 4 specific funds:

- The **Cohesion Fund (CF)**, to invest in environment and transport in the less prosperous EU countries;
- The **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**, to invest in the social and economic development of all EU regions and cities;
- **The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**, to support jobs and create a fair and socially inclusive society in EU countries;
- **The Just Transition Fund (JTF)** to support the regions most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality.

**The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)**, in turn, is no longer covered under the 2021–2027 Cohesion Policy. From 2023 onwards, instead, all new rural development actions will be incorporated into national CAP strategic plans. Each national plan will be built around key social, environmental and economic objectives for EU agriculture, forestry, and rural areas.

Both cohesion policy and rural development funds are **indirect funding, and therefore managed by national and regional authorities**. Applications for these funds run via the relevant regional or national authorities (known as **managing authorities**) in the member state where an organisation is registered.

\* [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2020/communicating-cohesion-policy-in-2021-2027](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2020/communicating-cohesion-policy-in-2021-2027)



Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.



The **Cohesion fund** aims to reduce regional disparities in terms of economic development and is a key instrument to achieve the Lisbon Strategy objectives to create growth and jobs.

It provides support to Member States with a gross national income (GNI) per capita below 90% EU-27 average to strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU.

The Cohesion Fund supports investments in the field of **environment, sustainable development, energy and trans-European networks** in the area of transport infrastructure (TEN-T), as well as information, communication studies and IA. It is now subject to the same rules of programming, management and monitoring as the ERDF and ESF through the Common Provisions Regulation.

For this current period, a percentage of 37% of the overall financial allocation of the Cohesion Fund are expected to contribute to climate objectives.

--> [c.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/](https://c.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/cohesion-fund/)



€36.611 billion



## Regional and national Managing Authorities



**The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)** finances programmes in shared responsibility between the European Commission and national and regional authorities in Member States. It is a classic fund for regional policy together with the Cohesion Fund.

The ERDF aims to strengthen economic, territorial and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting development imbalances between its regions. Based on their prosperity, all regions and Member States will concentrate the support on a more competitive and smarter Europe (policy objective – PO 1), as well as greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe (PO 2), through the mechanism known as 'thematic concentration'.

### Scope of support of ERDF:

- Investments in infrastructure;
- Activities for applied research and innovation;
- Investments to access to services;
- Safeguarding existing jobs and creating new jobs.

In 2021–2027, the ERDF will have a **special focus on sustainable urban development**. All regions and Member States will also concentrate at least 8% (from the previous 5% under the MFF 2014–2020) of their allocation to sustainable urban development that will be delivered through local development partnerships with different tools. This means that in the next programming period urban authorities will decide over at least EUR 17.4 bn (current prices), compared to a minimum of EUR 10.8 bn (current prices) of the previous programming period. Operations under the ERDF are also expected to contribute 30% of the overall financial envelope to climate objectives.

**The ERDF also puts forward a new instrument – the European Urban Initiative – which will offer support for cities according to the Urban Agenda for the EU.** In the framework of this initiative, cities will be able to join forces for innovative approaches to address urban challenges. As in the previous programming period, the partnership principle remains a key stone and it will be fully applicable for the first time already during programming.

--> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/funding/erdf/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/)



€ 313.159 billion



EU and non EU regions (incl. Neighbouring and pre-accession countries)

# 1.2.1 INTERREG



**European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)**, better known as Interreg, is supported by ERDF funds and is the Union's instrument to support cooperation across regions and countries.

The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a **harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole**. Interreg is built around three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C).

Interreg will support the following types of actions (referred to as "strands"):

- **Cross-border** cooperation between adjacent regions to promote integrated and harmonious regional development between neighbouring land and maritime border regions (Interreg A; (€5.713 billion 72,2% of total resources);
- **Transnational** cooperation over larger transnational territories or around sea-basins (Interreg B; (€1.466 billion' 18,2%);
- **Interregional** cooperation to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy (Interreg C; €500 million 6,1%);
- **Outermost** regions' cooperation to facilitate their integration and harmonious development in their region (Interreg D; (€271 million, 3,5%).

A new co-financing rate from ERDF of 80% is being set up with higher rates for cooperation at the EU external borders. Specific provision will also allow for more flexibility for small project funds:

- More resources are expected to be spent on climate action and social programmes, including public health;
- Increased support for small projects and people-to-people projects: up to 20% within an Interreg programme may be allocated to small project funds;
- Pre-financing levels (funds made available to member states following the approval of the Interreg programmes) are set at 1% for the years 2021 and 2022, and at 3% for the years 2023 to 2026, resulting in more liquidity for programmes. Novelties for cooperation:
- Cross border programmes: integrated development of cross border regions;
- Specific component for the outermost regions;
- Reinforced maritime cooperation;
- Additional cooperation outside the EU (incorporation of ENI-CBC Programmes);
- European Cross-Border Mechanism;

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



€ 7.95 billion



## National and regional Managing Authorities

# 1.3 ESF+



**The European Social Fund (ESF+)** plus is Europe's main tool for promoting employment and social inclusion for all.

The new ESF+ will remain the main EU instrument for investing in people – tackling the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, promoting high employment levels, building social protection and developing a skilled and resilient workforce ready for the transition to a green and digital economy.

The ESF+ integrates the former European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) and the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), allowing funding to be used in as efficient and coherent manner as possible.

### **The ESF+ will invest in the following priority areas:**

- **Supporting** young people who have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis – ESF+ resources will help these young people find a qualification, a good quality job, and improve their education and training;
- **Helping** children in need by allocating ESF+ resources to targeted actions to combat child poverty, and supporting the most vulnerable in society suffering from job losses and income reductions, including providing food and basic material assistance to the most deprived;
- **Reskilling** and upskilling for the transition to a green and digital economy;
- **Capacity building** for social partners and civil society organisations;
- **Transnational cooperation** for promoting social innovation across the EU through the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) strand.

In addition to the shared management strand of the fund ((€98.5 billion), the European Commission directly manages a smaller share (€762 million) of the ESF+ under the Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) Strand. This side of the fund will support analytical activities, capacity building and transnational/cross-border cooperation to strengthen social protection and social inclusion, fair working conditions, equal access to the labour market, social entrepreneurship and labour mobility. The ESF+ will additionally cover the middle and long-term inclusion aspect of migration (previously under AMIF), while short term measures remain under the AMIF.

--><https://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>



€98.5 billion (shared management strand)

€ 762 million (Employment and Social Innovation Strand)



EU Regions most affected by transition efforts\*



The **Just Transition Fund** is one of the elements of the Just Transition Mechanism for a transition towards climate neutrality.

The Commission provides grants to Member States having identified the territories expected to be the most negatively impacted by the green transition. **The fund supports the economic diversification and reconversion of the territories concerned, including:**

- investments in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
- creation of new firms
- research and innovation
- environmental rehabilitation
- clean energy
- up- and reskilling of workers
- job-search assistance
- transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations

Member States may, on a voluntary basis, transfer to the JTF additional resources from their national allocations under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), provided that the total amount transferred does not exceed three times the JTF allocation. Spending from the EU budget will be supplemented by national co-financing according to Cohesion policy rules.

#### **\*Eligibility to funding**

In the Territorial Just Transition Plans, EU countries have identified the territories and sectors eligible for funding under the Just Transition Fund based on the Commission's proposal for priority regions and sectors in terms of eligibility as laid out **Annex D of the 2020 European Semester Country Reports**, which can be found at this link: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-country-reports-and-communication\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2020-european-semester-country-reports-and-communication_en).



€ 19.32 billion, of which € 10.87 billion under NGEU



National and regional Managing a  
Authorities



**The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** is the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The fund has evolved in the last years to **ensure a sustainable, resilient and competitive agricultural sector**, and to enable a strong and vibrant socio-economic development in rural areas with an increased focus on the environment and climate issues. Whereas the first pillar offers direct support for farmers in the form of the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (C), the second pillar offers support direct investments in rural areas to stimulate growth, jobs, climate and environmental actions.

The EAFRD finances the EU's contribution to rural development programmes (RDPs), which consist of measures and projects that contribute to the EU-wide objectives of:

- improving the competitiveness of agriculture;
- encouraging sustainable management of natural resources and climate action;
- achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities.

Programmes are prepared on a national or regional basis, and must work towards specific targets relating to the EU's rural development objectives.

**Financial instruments using EAFRD resources are expected to support predominantly the agriculture and agri-food sectors to make the progress needed for the European Green Deal** and achieving the ambitious targets in line with the new Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies. They can also contribute to the new vision for rural areas through helping rural non-agricultural SMEs start or develop their activities.

--> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-agricultural-fund-rural-development-eafrd\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/european-agricultural-fund-rural-development-eafrd_en)



€95.51 billion



## 2. DIRECT GRANT FUNDING PROGRAMMES

The allocation of direct funding capital is managed by the European Institutions or relevant national agencies. Calls for proposals under direct management are published on the **Funding and Tenders Portal** (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/fundingtenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>), where interested applicants can find detailed information including the legislation and rules for participation, templates for proposals, evaluations and project reporting can be accessed, as well as additional guidance on the application process, evaluation and grant signature, grant management, and working as an expert.

The AER project unit provides support to its member regions in relation to specific open calls of interest and offers them tailored help in consortium building, by liaising with other regions and search for potential partners.



Organisations (private/public), universities and research institutions, public authorities (national, regional, local), SMEs, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



In 2021–2027, **Erasmus+** will continue to cover school, vocational education and training, higher education and adult learning, youth and sport.

The fund further promotes activities which foster knowledge and awareness of the EU and opportunities related to knowledge on forward looking topics like climate change and robotics.

The fund will cover €26.2 billion, nearly doubling the funding compared to its predecessor programme. It will be complemented by around €2.2 billion from the EU external cooperation instrument.

### Novelties:

- Improved outreach and inclusion through new formats like virtual exchanges and shorter learning periods abroad which translates in more opportunities for mobility;
- More sustainable through linking mobility to the European Green Deal (e.g. encouraging participants to use low-carbon means of transport) and by addressing "environment and climate action" as a thematic topic in more projects;
- Foster the capacity of teachers, trainers and youth workers, etc. to use digital tools and content, and promote alternative ways of learning such as distance and blended learning;
- The implementation of the programme will be significantly digitalised and simplified for participants, with novelties such as the European Student Card or the Accreditations. Developing accessible and high-quality digital learning and fostering digital capacities / increasing accessibility to these tools to all people
- Virtual and blended mobility: the programme has been affected by the pandemic and has developed a more rapid digitalisation with virtual mobility exchange taking places, and a greater flexibility for projects extensions;
- DiscoverEU will be part of Erasmus+ together with other new initiatives.
- Cooperation partnerships: small scale partnership: simplified rules and for newcomers to the programme and smaller organisations.
- Extension of accreditation: Sort of membership to the programme that allowed organisations to participate on a continuative basis. Every year extended to other sectors in the programme as well: schools, vet, adult education.



€26.2 billion



Organisations (private/public), universities and research institutions, public authorities (national, regional, local), SMEs, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



**Horizon Europe** is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation.

The aim of is to facilitate collaboration and strengthen the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges, and helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.

The programme will increase its impact by working closely with other EU programmes and policies, such as InvestEU, EU Cohesion Policy, Digital Europe, and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

For the first time in the history of the framework programme, regions can (voluntarily) transfer part of their regional funds to Horizon Europe to be used in research and innovation activities in their region. Moreover, €10 bn of the Horizon Europe total budget will support the CAP policy. Therefore, this budget will be invested in research and innovation in food, agriculture, rural development and the bioeconomy.

**Horizon Europe will be implemented according to three pillars:**

- Excellent science;
- Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness;
- Innovative Europe.

The second pillar is the most relevant for regions and local communities in horizon Europe. It replaces the societal challenges under Horizon 2020. It will focus on a set of 6 clusters:

- Health;
- Culture, creativity and inclusive society;
- Civil security for society;
- Digital, industry and space;
- Climate energy and mobility;
- Food bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment.

The third pillar is relevant to cities for including, for the first time, a section on the European Innovation Ecosystems aiming at streamlining international, national and local innovation programmes to stimulate innovation in public service areas and to provide market opportunities to European innovators. Particularly instruments on Public Procurement on Innovation (PPI) and Observatory of Public Sector Innovation could be of relevance to local authorities.

Regions and local authorities play an active role in a high number of work programmes under Horizon Europe. They are either included as target groups alongside national authorities or directly involved as partners in the proposals. Novelties:

### **Missions:**

- To highlight the impact of EU funding on citizen's lives and focus efforts around measurable, time-specific goals, 5 missions with defined targets were created. Research innovation can help by providing 5 generational goals that will be implemented by investments and research innovation: cancer, soil health and food, climate neutral and smart cities, healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, and adaptation to climate change including societal transformation.
- Open science policy: Mandatory open access to publications and open science principles are applied throughout the programme Factsheet: Open science in Horizon Europe

New approach to partnerships:

- Objective-driven and more ambitious partnerships with industry in support of EU policy objectives. The goal of European partnerships is to contribute to the achievement of EU priorities, address complex challenges outlined in Horizon Europe and strengthen the European Research Area (ERA)
- Co-funded partnerships offer opportunities for public authorities (national and regional) to participate as partners. Regions can also promote the calls launched by these partnerships to their stakeholders. In this type of partnership, a grant agreement is signed between the Commission and a consortium of beneficiaries.
- Co-funded partnerships are included in Cluster 1 (Health), Cluster 5 (Climate, Energy and Mobility) and Cluster 6 (Food, Bio economy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)

### **Interest for the regions:**

The programme has been reinforced, increasing the funding potential to support innovation in cities. The mission approach also gives priority to a new ambition for climate neutral and smart cities. Participation of regional and local communities is very much encouraged. Apart from the Partnerships, there are several other cluster topics where participation of regions is encouraged.

Examples:

- Cluster 2 – Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society – HORIZON-CL2-2022-HERITAGE-01-01: Safeguarding endangered languages in Europe, Coordination and Support Action, 3 million EUR. Participation of regional or local communities and/or administrations to ensure efficient and comprehensive bottom-up solutions.
- Cluster 3 – Civil Security for Society – three topics on “Disaster-Resilient Society for Europe” and one topic on “Resilient Infrastructure” (Research & Innovation Action/Innovation Action) require as additional eligibility condition: the active involvement, as beneficiaries, of at least 3 organisations representing citizens or local communities [...] and local or regional authorities [...].
- Furthermore, two topics on “Disaster-Resilient Society for Europe” require a multidisciplinary consortium involving local or regional communities and authorities as well as organisations representing citizens.

**There are several topics in the work programme under pillar 2 that are directly and indirectly targeting the regions and local communities. Moreover, all 5 missions have a strong regional component.**

Some examples:

- Mission Adaptation to Climate Change, topic on ‘Better prepared regional and local authorities to adapt to climate change’ (Coordination and Support Action, 5 million EUR)
- Cluster 5 – Climate, Energy and Mobility, topic on: ‘Renewable energy incorporation in agriculture and forestry’ (Innovation Action, 15 million EUR) with the expected outcome to foster regional development in rural areas
- Cluster 6 – Food, Bio economy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment, topic on: ‘Network for nature: multi-stakeholder dialogue platform to promote nature-based solutions’ (Coordination and Support Action, 6 million EUR): the project will develop a ready-to-use communication toolbox in all EU official languages for regional and local authorities to better communicate about NBS and their benefits, namely in terms of economic growth and job creation.



€95.5 billion



Organisations (private/public), universities and research institutions, public authorities (national, regional, local), SMEs, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



The new **Creative Europe programme** focuses on cooperation on cultural and linguistic diversity, cultural heritage, cultural and creative sector competitiveness, international presence as well as media literacy and social inclusion.

Cross cutting issues are inclusion, diversity and gender equality, and environment and the fight against climate change.

The specific objectives of Creative Europe are to enhance artistic and cultural cooperation at European level to support the creation of European works and strengthen the economic social and external dimension of and the innovation and mobility in Europe's cultural and creative sectors: enhance sectors and actors to act on national and transnational level.

The programme will be arranged around the already existing 3 strands:

- **Culture** (includes cultural heritage and the European Capitals of Culture);
- **Media** ( audiovisual industry);
- **Cross-sectoral** (activities such as international exchange of experience and peer learning across audiovisual and other cultural and creative sectors);
- Novelties in European cooperation projects are: an additional category (medium), higher co-financing rates, increased pre-financing, sectoral approach, lump-sums, and eGrants.

The **culture strand** aims at strengthening the circulation of European works in a digital and multilingual environment, and where appropriate, by means of translation. It supports a wide range of cultural and creative sectors including architecture, cultural heritage, design, literature and publishing, music performing arts.

The **media strand** supports the European film and audiovisual industries to develop, distribute and promote European works, taking into account today's digital environment. It is strengthened with a focus on increasing cooperation at EU level through support through co-production. The cross-cutting priorities of this strand are the European Green Deal and the EU gender Equality Strategy.

To ensure more flexibility in the actions supported and to encourage cooperation among the different parts of the audiovisual value-chain the strand is divided in clusters (audience, content, business, policy support and awareness raising).

**The cross-sectoral strand** aims at reinforcing collaboration between different cultural and creative sectors, in order to help them address the common challenges they face and find innovative new solutions. This is achieved through policy cooperation, the services provided by the Creative Europe desks, and the Creative Innovation Lab.

For the first time, Creative Europe offers funding to the news media sector in order to promote media literacy, pluralism and media freedom, as well as activities to help the sector adjust to the structural and technological changes it faces.

This is where the regions can play a role – **cultural heritage sites** are identified at national level. Contributed cultural heritage to European values and development of Europe as we know it today. In addition, associate countries that declare an intent to join the programme are eligible to be part of projects.

- Objective 1: Transnational creation and circulation: to strengthen the transnational creation and circulation of European works and artists;
- Objective 2: Innovation: to enhance the capacity of European cultural and creative sectors to nurture talents, to innovate, to prosper and to generate jobs and growth.

Categories (consortium composition with a max duration of 48 months):

- Small scale projects: min 3 entities – 80% EU co-funding;
- Medium-range cooperation (new): 5 entities/ countries – 70% EU co-funding;
- Large scale: min 10 entities – 60% EU co-funding.



€2,44 billion (58% media, 33% culture), compared to €1.47 billion of the previous programme (2014-2020).



Organisations (private/public), universities and research institutions, public authorities (national, regional, local), SMEs, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



**Digital Europe** is the new EU programme focused on building the strategic digital capacities of the EU and facilitating the wide deployment of digital technologies.

It will fund investment in technologies but also in their deployment among citizens, businesses and public administration including through developing digital skills. Making Europe greener and more digital are the twin transition challenges that we have. Digital transition is something that has increased lately due to the covid pandemic. Budget is a total of €7.5 billion.

#### Management modes:

- High Performance Computing – Joint Undertaking Euro HPC
- Artificial Intelligence – European Commission, mainly
- Cybersecurity & Trust – European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology & Research Competence Centre & European Commission
- Advanced Digital Skills – Health and Digital Executive Agency, mainly
- Deployment, best use & interoperability – Health and Digital Executive Agency & European Commission notably for areas of public interest and European Digital Innovation Hubs

The programme also targets upskilling to provide a workforce for these advanced digital technologies. It supports industry, SME's, and public administration in their digital transformation with a reinforced network of European Digital Innovation Hubs.

The area most relevant for regions and cities include:

- **Artificial intelligence** (€ 2.061b): opening up the use of artificial intelligence by businesses and public administrations;
- **Advanced digital skills** (€577m): including by upskilling the existing workforce;
- **Implementation of European Digital Innovation Hubs network** (€750m);
- **Ensuring the wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society** (€1.072b): supporting high impact development in areas such as health, green deal, smart communities and the cultural sector. It will also support European public administrations to deploy and access state of the art digital technologies and build public trust in the digital transformation.



€7.5 Billion



Organisations (private/public), universities and research institutions, public authorities (national, regional, local), SMEs, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



**LIFE** is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU.

It finances local authorities for implementing best practices, pilot and demonstration projects. New type of projects (strategic nature projects) will also be accepted to support the mainstreaming of nature and biodiversity policy objectives into other EU policies like agriculture. The new LIFE instrument will be composed of 4 sub-programmes:

Most projects within the programme have a bottom up approach. Moreover, all beneficiaries can participate alone. The co-financing rates for LIFE have been increased (up to 95%), making it easier for local authorities to take part in the programme.

There are 4 sub-programmes:

- Sub-programme nature and biodiversity
- Halting and reversing biodiversity loss.
- Supporting Natura 2000 network and Prioritised Action Frameworks.
- Mainstreaming nature and biodiversity objectives into other policies and financing programmes.

#### **Sub-programme circular economy and quality of life**

This sub programme aims at facilitating the transition toward a sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient economy and at protecting, restoring and improving the quality of the environment, either through direct interventions or by supporting the integration of those objectives in other policies. LIFE will continue to co-finance projects in the environmental sector, in particular in the area of the circular economy, including recovery of resources from waste, water, air, noise, soil and chemical management as well as environmental governance.

#### **Sub-programme climate mitigation and adaptation**

This sub-programme will contribute to the shift towards a sustainable, energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and resilient economy, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

The transformation of the European Union into a climate-neutral and – resilient society, especially through 3 components:

- **Climate change mitigation:** projects that contribute significantly to the implementation of the 2030 energy and climate policy, the EU Member States' National Energy and Climate Plans, European Union's mid-century and long-term climate and energy strategy;
- **Climate change adaptation:** projects that support the implementation of the new EU adaptation strategy and related national implementation;
- **Climate related governance** and information.

### **The sub-programme clean energy transition (new)**

Building on the success of the Intelligent Energy Europe (2003–2013) and Horizon 2020 Energy Efficiency (2014–2020) programmes, the LIFE Clean Energy Transition sub-programme continues to support the delivery of EU policies in the field of sustainable energy, in particular, the European Green Deal, the Energy Union (2030 energy and climate targets) and the European Union's 2050 long-term decarbonisation strategy.



€562 million



Public authorities (national, regional, local) in EU Member states, civil society organisations, social enterprises, foundations, universities and institutions.



**The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)** aims to further boost national capacities and improve procedures for migration management, together with enhancing solidarity and responsibility sharing between Member States, in particular through emergency assistance and the relocation mechanism.

It also reinforces complementarity with ESF+ and ERDF for medium and long-term integration interventions. The regulation is set up to better acknowledge the role of local authorities and to implement a higher co-financing rate for cities.

The European Commission will also directly manage more funding which allows for more transnational projects. Minimum amounts have been abolished as well as joint specific actions. In regards to regions, direct access has been granted for cities to support reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

In terms of content, AMIF will contribute to the **achievement of four specific objectives:**

- **strengthen** and develop all aspects of the common European asylum system, including its external dimension;
- **support** legal migration to the Member States, including by contributing to the integration of third-country nationals;
- **contribute** to countering irregular migration and ensuring effectiveness of return and readmission in third countries;
- **enhance** solidarity and responsibility sharing between the Member States, in particular towards those most affected by migration and asylum challenges.



EUR 9.9 billion



SMEs, profit making entities, business support organisations; non-profit organisations); public authorities; universities or educational institutions; international organisations; non-governmental organisations; European umbrella organisations.

## 2.7 SINGLE MARKET



The **Single Market Programme** aims to strengthen the governance of the EU single market.

It will help to:

- **make the internal market work better** with measures including improved market surveillance, problem-solving support to citizens and business, and enhanced competition policy
- **boost the competitiveness of businesses**, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) develop effective European standards and international financial and non-financial reporting and auditing standards give even higher protection to consumers maintain a high level of food safety produce and disseminate high-quality statistics.

The programme brings many activities together under one coherent umbrella to reduce overlaps. It focuses investment where it will have most impact.

Predecessor programmes are: COSME, European Statistical Programme (ESP), Reporting and Auditing, Enhancing consumers involvement in the EU policy making in the field of financial services, Food and Feed, Consumer Programme.



€4.2 billion



Organisations, universities, regions and local authorities, institutions, civil society organisations. Some calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



**EU4Health** is the EU's response to COVID-19, which has had a major impact on medical and healthcare staff, patients and health systems in Europe.

EU4Health will provide funding to EU countries, health organisations and NGOs. The new programme will go beyond crisis response to pave the way for a stronger, healthier and more resilient Health Union.

EU4Health will:

- **boost** EU's preparedness for major cross border health threats by creating; reserves of medical supplies for crises;
- **create** a reserve of healthcare staff and experts that can be mobilised to respond to crises across the EU;
- **increase** surveillance of health threats;
- **strengthen** health systems so that they can face epidemics as well as long-term challenges by stimulating;
- **promote** disease prevention and health promotion in an ageing population; digital transformation of health systems;
- **improve** access to health care for vulnerable groups;
- **make** medicines and medical devices available and affordable, advocate the prudent and efficient use of antimicrobials as well as promote medical and pharmaceutical innovation and greener manufacturing.



€5.1 billion, becoming the largest health programme ever in monetary terms.



Organisations, universities, regions and local authorities, institutions, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



The new **Justice, Rights and Values Fund** comprises the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme** (CERV) and the **Justice Programme**.

The Right and values programme has 4 main objectives which constitute the different strands:

- promoting equality and rights;
- citizens engagement and participation;
- fighting violence (Daphne strand);
- European values.

The funds will be used for activities built around awareness raising and training, mutual learning including town-twinning, analytical and monitoring, support to civil society organisations and developing capacities of European networks. It integrates all the actions on citizenship previously spread across 2 different programmes.

The new Justice Programme will contribute to the further development of a European area of justice based on the rule of law, mutual recognition and mutual trust, as well as facilitating and supporting judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters and promoting the rule of law, supporting and promoting judicial training, and facilitating effective access to justice for all and effective redress, as well as promoting and strengthening the rights of victims of crime and the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons in criminal proceedings. Specific attention will be put on promoting gender equality and children's rights.



€1.6 billion



Organisations, universities, regions and local authorities, institutions, civil society organisations. Many calls also available for participants from non-eu associated countries.



The **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** aims to support the achievement of the EU policy objectives in the transport, energy and digital sector, as regards the trans-European networks, by enabling or accelerating investments into projects of common interest, and to support cross-border cooperation on renewable energy generation.

It will aim at maximising synergies among the sectors covered by CEF and with the other EU programmes.

-**On digital**, the digital priorities include providing gigabit connectivity to socioeconomic drivers such as hospitals, schools and research centres, but also wireless connectivity to local communities and very high-capacity networks to households or digital operational platforms associated with energy or transport structures.

-**On transport**, the new focus will be decarbonization and making transport connected, sustainable, inclusive, safe and secure. Cohesion funds will also be dedicated to transport and channelled through the CEF transport. The completion of the core network corridors will be the main focus of the Programme. CEF technical dialogues are ongoing. Eurocities shall engage its members in advocating towards their national administration (responsible ministry) to ensure a greater transparency. In the transport sector, CEF is dedicated to the implementation of the TEN-T and aims at supporting investments in cross-border connections, missing links as well as promoting sustainability and digitalisation.

-Finally, **on energy**, part of the budget should be dedicated to transition towards clean energy and a more interconnected, smarter and digitalized EU energy system. Most funding should be allocated to cross-border projects.



€28.412 billion:  
€21.4 billion for transport;  
€5.2 billion for energy;  
€1.8 billion for digital.



# 3. EU TOOLS AND TRAINING FOR ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY BUILDING



The current programming period 2021–2027 contains new rules, instruments and processes that might result difficult for the beneficiaries to fully understand and consequently to put in place the right actions to access them. Additionally, the management and the proper reporting of the use of these funds might be an added challenge that leads to some gaps in how the funds are used.

To this extent, the European Commission provides different typology of tools and training to **increase the capacity of the regions and relevant stakeholders' organisations to access and manage EU funds**. This section provides an overview of the main EU instruments designed to help civil servants to increase their skills in topics such as administrative capacity, mutual learning and exchange of practices, prevention of mismanagement, fraud and corruption.



National and regional managing authorities,  
intermediate bodies and national coordinating bodies



The **practical toolkit** provides operational insights, methodological and practical support and examples that can be used in developing roadmaps for building the administrative capacities of Member State administrators and thus facilitating programme implementation.

It builds on the experiences from the Pilot action on frontloading administrative capacity building to prepare for the post-2020 programming period. In this pilot action, five managing authorities and one intermediate body in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Poland and Spain benefitted of the OECD's expertise to develop roadmaps to address their administrative capacity-building needs. The OECD has drafted a report, 'Strengthening Governance of EU Funds under Cohesion Policy', on phase I of the pilot action which includes key findings and recommendations for managing authorities, national authorities and the European Commission in relation to the roadmaps for the administrative capacity building.

The toolkit is structured into six main sections that reflect the main stages of the roadmap process development:

1. **Why** – sets out the rationale for investing in capacity building
2. **What** – outlines the various options for funding capacity building and describes how they can be combined in a roadmap for building administrative capacities
3. **How** – explains the roadmap development process and methodologies, and the importance of involving stakeholders.
4. **Indicators** – focuses on monitoring the implementation of the roadmap and measuring the performance
5. **Roadmap structure** – gives an example of the possible structure of a roadmap for building administrative capacities
6. **Financing** not linked to cost – provides support for Member States wishing to avail themselves of 'Financing not linked to costs for technical assistance'. It deals with how to develop such schemes, and how to identify and price the results to be achieved or the conditions to be fulfilled. The use of indicators to measure success is also covered.

The roadmap is designed to define and tackle administrative capacity issues, using a strategic approach that takes account of the short, medium- and longer-term perspective. It is viewed as good practice, especially in Member States where weaknesses in administrative capacity have been identified.

### How to access it:

\* the toolkit is available in 14 languages at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/roadmap-admin/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/roadmap-admin/)



National and regional managing authorities,  
intermediate bodies and national coordinating bodies



This **self-assessment instrument** designed for use by national and regional authorities that implement or manage EU funds under cohesion policy, allowing them to assess their strengths and weaknesses.

The instrument offers subjective evaluation elements, complemented by insights and good practices to support managing authorities to develop actions that will strengthen capacities pertinent to their administrative needs and priorities. Specifically, national and regional-level managing authorities of EU funds under cohesion policy can use this instrument to:

- **Identify and prioritise** the managing authorities' administrative capacity gaps in managing EU funds;
- **Develop** administrative capacity-building actions to address identified gaps;
- **Facilitate** auto-evaluation of progress over time.

This instrument is structured around the OECD analytical framework's five pillars: people management; organisation management; strategic planning, coordination and implementation; beneficiaries and stakeholders; and enabling framework conditions. It includes the Self-Assessment Matrix that serves as "conversation starter" for the managing authorities in order to identify – through internal group discussions – their administrative strengths and weaknesses, and provide insight into whether they are equipped to meet its objectives.

The matrix is structured as follows:

- **Pillars** – the matrix covers four of the elements i) People management, ii) Organisation management, iii) Strategic planning, coordination and implementation, iv) Beneficiaries and stakeholders.
- **Goals:** – each pillar identifies several goals that a managing authority should consider achieving to reinforce administrative and investment management capacity; for each goal, a detailed description is provided as a reference.
- **Capacities** – under each goal are a number of different specific capacities that can help an managing authority to achieve the goal.
- **Dimensions (good practice):** Each capacity is broken down into multiple dimensions associated with an assessment level. For each dimension, a clear description of "good practice" is provided as a reference.
- **The Self-assessment Matrix** is flexible in terms of applicability. A managing authority can complete the whole matrix, or specific capacities.

### How to access it:

\* the self assessment instrument is available at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/how/improving-investment/ACB\\_Self\\_assessment\\_Instrument.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/how/improving-investment/ACB_Self_assessment_Instrument.pdf);

\* the self-assessment matrix is available at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment)



National and regional managing authorities,  
intermediate bodies and national coordinating bodies



The **Competency Framework** is a new tool to support Member States administrations in their efforts to improve their administrative capacity for management of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund and to strengthen their competences.

It consists of a set of excel files that identify the competencies that employees of administrations should possess and it covers all types of administrations that manage or implement the ERDF and Cohesion Fund. The framework refers to operational, professional and management competences corresponding to different types of jobs: operational, supervising and decision-making level.

The Competency Framework is accompanied by the web-based Self-Assessment Tool that identifies competency gaps both at individual and institutional levels, and therefore the competency development needs.

Specifically, on the process:

- **it enables employees to assess their level of proficiency** in competencies that correspond to their job role, as defined in the EU Competency Framework;
- **the self-assessment of the employee** is then compared to his/her supervisor's assessment and the medium-term development goal;
- the results of individual assessments can be aggregated to provide an overarching view of the level of knowledge and skills across the entire administration;
- **these results can be used by the management of the administration** to develop a strategy to address identified competency gaps, e.g. in the form of a Learning and Development Plan that details the competency development activities that have been decided (e.g. Training sessions and seminars on cohesion policy, Taix-Regio Peer 2 Peer, etc).

This user-friendly and flexible tool covers a full range of competencies and can be applied to all kinds of administrations regardless of their size or whether they are managing a sectoral or regional operational programme. Its impact goes well beyond the management of the funds contributing to a longer-term competency development improving the entire administration's functioning.

#### How to access it:

\* the competency framework is available at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/competency/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/competency/);

\* the user guidelines is available at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2017/user-guidelines-for-the-eu-competency-framework-and-self-assessment-tool](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2017/user-guidelines-for-the-eu-competency-framework-and-self-assessment-tool);

\* contact DG REGIO at [REGIO-COMPETENCY-FRAMEWORK@ec.europa.eu](mailto:REGIO-COMPETENCY-FRAMEWORK@ec.europa.eu)



Managing authorities, intermediate bodies, national coordinating authorities, audit authorities, certifying authorities, joint secretariat for European territorial cooperation programmes



**Taiex-Regio Peer2Peer** facilitates exchanges between the national and regional bodies that manage and administer ERDF and cohesion funds. It helps civil servants share knowledge, good practice and practical approaches with their peers in other EU countries, thus upgrading their administrative capacity.

Specifically, this programme funds and organise short-term exchanges between programme authorities to share existing knowledge according to the following formats:

- **Study visit** (2-5 days) – employees from a requesting institution visit a host institution in another EU country to learn new working methods and innovative approaches;
- **Expert visit** ( 2-5 days) – an experienced civil servant visits a requesting institution in another EU country to provide peer advice and direct support on a specific topic or task;
- **Workshop** (1-2 days) – experienced civil servants from EU countries meet at the requesting institution to share their experiences, discuss common issues or develop solutions together;
- **Webinars** (one or several half-day sessions) – requesting institutions benefit from peer advice from other EU countries directly from their offices. And using dedicated virtual platforms with the technical support from Taiex-Regio Peer 2 Peer.

#### How to apply and implement Taiex-Regio Peer2Peer exchanges?

- **Application** – a Member State Administration submit the online form;
- **Evaluation** – the Commission examine the application and take a decision on the eligibility and value of the requested exchange;
- **Preparation** – once the application is approved, the applicant Member State administration is requested to draft the agenda of the exchange and the Commission looks for relevant expertise. Then both start preparing the exchange;
- **Exchange activity** – the exchange take place;
- **Evaluation** – the participants of the exchange are requested to provide a short feedback to assess the impact.

The entire cycle takes about 6-8 weeks for study visit and expert missions, while 10 weeks for workshops.

#### How to access it:

\* Taiex online application form

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/TMSWebRestrict/resources/js/app/#/applicationform/home>;

\*Taiex-Regio Peer2Peer website: [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/)

\* contact DG REGIO at [REGIO-PEER2PEER@ec.europa.eu](mailto:REGIO-PEER2PEER@ec.europa.eu);



Civil servants from regional and national administrations



The **REGIO Peer2Peer Communities** are networks of civil servants from regional and national administrations that manage EU funding from the ERDF, the cohesion fund and the just transition fund. They join forces to share knowledge and practices to use the funds more effectively.

Communities focus on specific topics to learn from each other's experience, and co-design tools to help the participants in their daily work. Communities run at the initiative of the members, with the support of facilitators ('community managers'). In practice, **the Communities offer a space for practitioners across EU countries to meet, discuss and work together to resolve common issues linked to implementing EU regional and urban policy.** They do that through workshops, webinars and other typology of online interactions.

Currently there are three Communities active: the ACB Roadmaps Community, the State Aid Community and the Citizens Participation Community.

### How can you join a Community?

- You must be an administrator dealing with ERDF or the cohesion fund, working in a managing authority, intermediate body;
- Depending on your interest, you might either join an existing community or set up a new one;
- To join an existing community, go to the Futurium webpage, log-in and click to join a Community (after that, you can discover all info, publications, events, etc)
- To propose a new topic, go to the Futurium webpage and click on the section "Propose a Community".

### How to access it:

\* the Futurium website contains all materials, dates of events, and forum for discussions:

<https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/en/regio-peer-2-peer-communities>

\* for general questions contact [bruno.mola@ec.europa.eu](mailto:bruno.mola@ec.europa.eu)



EU Member States stakeholders and policy makers,  
managing authorities



The **European Social Fund Transnational Cooperation Platform** was launched by the European Commission in 2020 with the objective to foster transnational cooperation, by replicating initiatives that work well and increasing the scale of innovative practices.

### The platform aims to:

- **Improve cooperation** between stakeholders in all Member States, by sharing information, knowledge, and experience to develop joint solutions to common challenges
- **Build the capacity**, skills, and confidence of managing authorities and other stakeholders to apply new knowledge and transfer practices with the support of peers from other countries;
- **Inform EU** and national employment policies and reforms with experiences from the ground.

The mutual learning activities provided by the platform are: study visits, peer reviews, peer-to-peer trainings, workshops, webinars, and tailored EU-level conferences.

Thematically, four Communities of Practices have been created on:

- Employment, Education and Skills;
- Results-based Management;
- Social Inclusion;
- Social Innovation.

### How to access it:

\* ESF Transnational cooperation platform website

<https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/transnational-cooperation-platform>

\* Publications available at this link <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/publications>

\* for general questions contact [Marianne.Doyen@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Marianne.Doyen@ec.europa.eu)



EU Member States managing authorities and beneficiaries; it covers also pre-accession countries and eastern neighbourhood countries



**Jaspers** is a partnership between the European Commission and the EIB that advises on strategies, programmes and projects for investments supported by European grant funds, mainly European Structural and Investment Funds, Connecting Europe Facility, and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance.

### How does Jasper work?

- Jaspers operates based on action plans prepared through cooperation with the beneficiary country and the European Commission; these plans list the investment projects that Jaspers may assist through individual assignments;
- a managing authority acts as the central coordinator for each country and requests assistance from Jasper;
- Jaspers' experts work in close cooperation with the beneficiary, managing authority and relevant intermediate bodies, however Member States or Enlargement Countries remain the owners of the projects.

### Novelties in the 2021-27 programming period:

- Jaspers' advisory budget will come from different funding streams: the Cohesion Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Just Transition Fund, CEF and IPA;
- Jasper will extend its support for Member States through the DG REGIO mandate; it will support pre-accession and eastern neighbourhood countries through mandates with DG NEAR; it will scale up assistance to transport projects under the CEF mandate.
- Jaspers will contribute to Urbis (Urban Investment Support), a partnership between the European Commission and the European Investment Bank;
- Jaspers will support Europe's transition towards a climate-neutral economy by 2050.

### How to access it:

\* Jasper Networking Platform available at this link [www.jaspersnetwork.org](http://www.jaspersnetwork.org)

\* Jasper website <https://jaspers.eib.org/index.htm>



EU Member States managing authorities  
and stakeholders



The **Competence Centre for Social Innovation** started in the 2014–2020 programming period with the establishing of six consortia aimed to set up national competence centres and drive social innovation, locally, regionally, nationally and transnationally.

**The key functions** of the national competence centres, that should support the implementation and programming of the ESF+, **are:**

- **Support mutual learning** between ESF/ESF+ managing authorities and stakeholders;
- **Support beneficiaries** of the ESF social innovation+ calls for proposals;
- Support the wider social innovation community in Europe with data and information;
- **Communicate** on social innovation to stakeholders, to wider public and to policy makers.

Competence centres are expected to become a reliable source of knowledge and expertise. Beyond the current transnational cooperation and from an ESF+ perspective, this work will inform attempts to also set up a European Competence Centre for Social Innovation, as a cooperation platform that would allow far greater levels of collaboration across Europe.

### **How to access it:**

\* Competence centres for social innovation website

<https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/competence-centres-social-innovation>;

\* for general questions contact [Marianne.Doyen@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Marianne.Doyen@ec.europa.eu).



EU Member States' authorities and anti-fraud experts



The online **EU Funds Anti-fraud Knowledge and Resource Centre** is designed to assist managing authorities and anti-fraud practitioners and improve their capacity to detect and prevent the fraudulent use of EU funds.

It gives concrete examples, presents tools that have proven to be effective, shares knowledge and connects practitioners.

The online Centre consists of video modules, tools, definitions, good practices, case studies that can support practitioners in the prevention, detection, investigation and preparation of fraud in EU funds.



Video modules



Library of Good practices and Cases studies



Useful tools



Definitions & glossary



Guidance & Legislation



Tests

### How to access it:

\* the online EU Funds Anti-fraud Knowledge and Resource Centre is available at this link:

[https://ec.europa.eu/antifraud-knowledge-centre/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/antifraud-knowledge-centre/index_en)



EU Member States' managing authorities, intermediate bodies and audit authorities



### **Training on Cohesion Policy for EU Member State Experts**

DG REGIO in cooperation with DG EMPL and DG GROW organises a series of training targeting national and regional authorities responsible for the management of cohesion policy programmes, in order to support them in interpreting and applying the regulatory requirements in different areas of programme implementation. In particular, training is provided on state aid, public procurement, identifying and preventing fraud and corruption in ESI funds.

The training is organised by the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) and is scheduled in 2–3 sessions per year.

#### **Training materials:**

- Module 1: Programme implementation, ensuring greater focus on results
- Module 2: Management and control; management verifications
- Module 3: Ensuring result-orientation in Operational Programmes 2014–2020: Programme management, Project Selection, Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation
- Module 4: State aid
- Module 5: Public Procurement
- Module 6: Identifying and preventing fraud and corruption in ESI funds
- Module 7: From the Toolkit to your own Roadmaps for Administrative Capacity Building: facilitating programme implementation

#### **How to access it:**

\* training materials and video recording are available at this link

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/legislation/guidance/training/#4](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/legislation/guidance/training/#4)



EU Member States' managing authorities, monitoring organisations, public tenderers, policy makers, civil society groups



An **Integrity Pact** is a contract between a contracting authority and economic operators bidding for public contracts that they will abstain from corrupt practices and will conduct a transparent procurement process.

To ensure accountability and legitimacy, an Integrity Pact includes a separate contract with a civil society organisation which monitors that all parties comply with their commitments.

**An Integrity Pact has multiple objectives and it is envisaged to bring long-term benefits of transparency and trust:**

- make public procurement more transparent and accountable;
- involve civil society in the monitoring of public procurement and use of EU funds;
- increase citizens' trust in the process and in their administrations.

**The Integrity Pacts are accompanied by a practical Toolkit that includes several tools:**

- **Handbook** for setting up Integrity Pacts for Authorities, Monitoring organisations and tenderers;
- **Guide** for decisions makers to help EU authorities embed Integrity Pacts in their programmes to safeguard strategic investments under the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027 and recovery funds;
- **Booklet** presenting impact cases from the Pilot Project;
- Training for national and regional managing authorities and for monitoring organisations;
- **Communities** of practice for administrators from EU Member States;
- Knowledge exchange hub for project partners and stakeholders;
- **Red Flags detection tool** for drawing attention to potential fraud risks in a procurement process, based on contract notices and contract award notices published on the EU's Tenders Electronic Database;
- **Tender Defender – Cards on the Table!** being a board game that helps civil society groups, journalists, activists, and others learn about public procurement and identify corruption risks that may arise.

The Integrity Pacts build on experiences from the Pilot Project on Integrity Pacts 2016–2021, where 11 Member States organised the monitoring of 18 projects, under the coordination of Transparency International.

### How to access it:

\* more information on the Integrity Pacts available at this link

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/integrity-pacts/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/improving-investment/integrity-pacts/)

\* and additionally by contacting [justyne.balasinska@ec.europa.eu](mailto:justyne.balasinska@ec.europa.eu)



EU Member States' managing authorities (that can grant the access also to their certifying authorities, audit authorities, intermediate bodies), paying agencies in the Member States



**Arachne** is an integrated IT tool for data mining and data enrichment developed by the European Commission to support managing authorities in their administrative controls and management checks in the area of structural funds (ESF and ERDF).

#### **This tool:**

- establishes a comprehensive database of projects implemented under the structural funds in the EU;
- enriches the data with publicly available information in order to identify the projects, beneficiaries, contracts and contractors which might be susceptible to risks of fraud, conflict of interest and irregularities;
- it provides highly valuable risks alerts to enrich management verifications;
- it does not assess the particular individual conduct of fund recipients and does not as such serve to exclude automatically any beneficiaries from the Funds.

#### **What are the benefits for the managing authorities?**

- Install and run the risk scoring tool free of charge, being provided for Member States by the European Commission;
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of management verifications, by using the Arachne Risk Scoring Tool that helps to allocate human resource capacity for the desk review and on-the-spot verifications by focusing on the more risky beneficiaries, projects, contractors and contracts;
- Show and document the result of increased efficiency and effectiveness of management verification, given by the use of the Arachne Risk Scoring Tool;
- Strengthen measures to prevent and fight against irregularities, thanks to a set of risk indicators available that might help managing authorities in identifying the most risky projects, beneficiaries, contractors and contracts;
- Profit from automatic dataflow and decreased administrative burden.

#### **Actions offered by the EC Arachne team in the Member States:**

- General presentation(s) of the Arachne risk scoring tool;
- Support managing authorities/paying agencies with the generation of Arachne compatible data files;
- Full support during the integration phase;
- Training for Arachne users.

#### **How to access it:**

\*interface user manual available here: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=325&intPageId=3587&langId=en>

\* for general questions contact [EC-ARACHNE-INFO@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EC-ARACHNE-INFO@ec.europa.eu)



## CONTACT US

**Assembly of European Regions**  
Rue d'Arlon 63,  
1040 Brussels  
[www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)  
[info@aer.com](mailto:info@aer.com)  
[@europeanregions](https://www.instagram.com/europeanregions)



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

