



European
Commission

Management Plan 2021

DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

PART 1. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for the year 5

1. General objective: A European Green Deal 6

2. General objective: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age 11

3. General objective: An Economy that Works for People 14

4. General objective: A Stronger Europe in the World 25

PART 2. Modernising the administration: main outputs for the year 27

A. Human resource management 28

B. Sound financial management 29

C. Fraud risk management 30

D. Digital transformation and information management 31

E. Sound environmental management 35

F. Examples of initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities 36

ANNEX: Performance tables 39

Part 1: Delivering on Commission priorities 39

Part 2: Modernising the administration 50

INTRODUCTION

The motto of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO) is ‘Helping EU regions grow, together’. Our vision is one of European regions and cities embracing together the Green and Digital transitions; to ensure lasting improvement in the economy and quality of life for everybody, leaving no one and no region behind. Achieving this vision is particularly challenging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that will likely lead to an asymmetric recovery between and within Member States with the prospect of rising economic and social disparities within the Union.

We engage with EU Member States, regions, citizens and other stakeholders to assess needs, finance investments and evaluate the results from a long-term EU perspective. Together, we ensure that the money is well invested. The strategic planning and programming cycle is the Commission’s performance management framework. Its purpose is to help ensure that the Commission achieves its objectives in an efficient and effective manner. The basis for the 2020-2024 cycle is the agenda of President von der Leyen, as set out in her political guidelines and further developed in the mission letters sent to all Members of the Commission.

The management plan defines the most important outputs. It follows the structure of the strategic plan and reflects the priority actions identified in the Commission Work Programme for 2021. With political steer by the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, REGIO will aim to realise the objectives set in its strategic plan for the years 2020-2024 against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

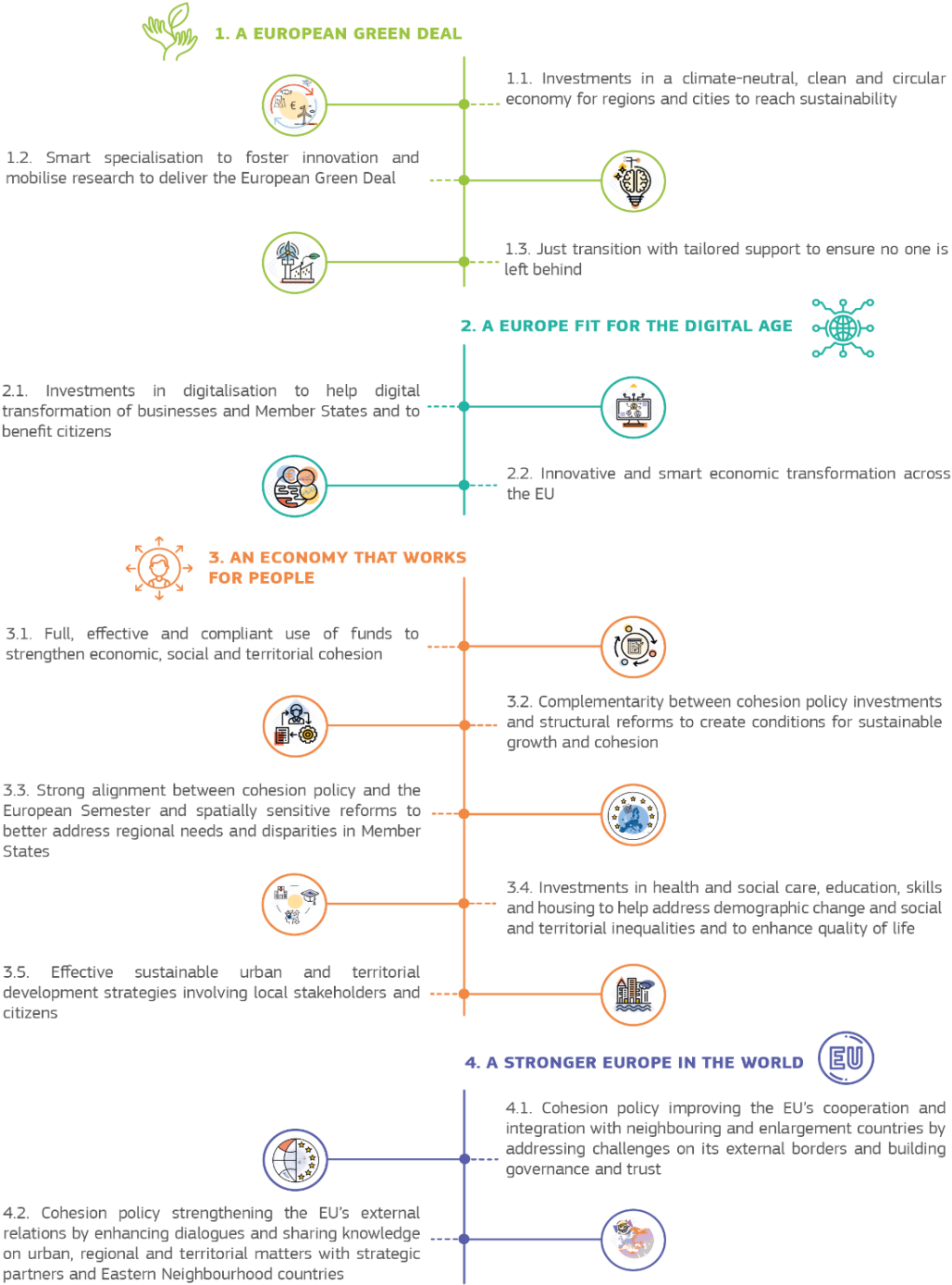
The main priorities and challenges of REGIO in 2021 will be:

- to facilitate Member States’ efforts in overcoming the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through processing **2014-2020 programme amendments** linked to the **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII and CRII plus)** and supporting them in the programming and implementation of the substantial additional resources offered by the **Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU)**; this will require accelerating the COVID-19 provoked digital transformation push both in the public and private sectors through investments, mainly in the least developed parts of Europe.
- to rapidly adopt the **2021-2027 legislative framework** (also covering the changes introduced in the proposals for the next MFF and in particular the **Just Transition Fund** and **Public Sector Loan Facility**) and pursue the dialogue with Member States in order to **finalise and adopt the new Partnership Agreements and programmes** to ensure their contribution to the long-term recovery effort and the green and now even more prominent digital transitions; the latter will be realised through support to digitalisation as an innovation enabler.

- to provide strong support to Member States as regards the preparation of high quality **Territorial Just Transition Plans** so that that the new fund and instruments could be rapidly deployed. The timely setting up of the **Just Transition Platform** providing comprehensive technical and advisory support will be essential in this respect.

PART 1. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for the year

In line with the Strategic Plan, REGIO will contribute in particular to the following four general objectives of the von der Leyen Commission with targeted actions regrouped along 12 specific objectives:



1. General objective: A European Green Deal

Regional policy and its funds will be a key instrument for supporting the delivery on the ground of the European Green Deal and related initiatives in 2021.

To this end, in 2021, REGIO will, on behalf of the Commission, continue discussing with a view of finalising Partnership Agreements (PA) with 27 Member States and around 300 investment and cooperation programmes. Implementation of 2014-2020 programmes will also continue, delivering investments in the areas of the low-carbon economy, environmental and climate-change adaptation. Harnessing the full potential of the strengthened EU budget, presented in the framework of the Recovery Plan for Europe, will further foster the twin green and digital transformation to build a more sustainable and resilient Europe for the next generation.

The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) is a key tool to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind.



Specific objective 1.1: Investments in a climate neutral, clean and circular economy for regions and cities to reach sustainability

The support from cohesion policy for the needed transition to a green and climate neutral economy will be key to reach the targets of climate-neutrality and circular economy by 2050 and contribute to a just transition, also in line with the objectives of the Recovery Plan for Europe and the substantially increased allocation for the Just Transition Fund.

In reviewing the draft 2021-2027 programmes, REGIO will ensure that they respect the investment priorities included in the thematic policy papers, which were prepared in July 2018 and will be reviewed in the first quarter of 2021 against the legal framework resulting from the political agreements reached in December. REGIO will continue to operate three matrices to discuss issues linked to energy, climate change, environment, sustainable and smart mobility, digitalisation, innovation and industrial policy.

In 2021, REGIO will continue its work with other services and with Member States to facilitate the fulfilment of the various enabling conditions related to the future cohesion policy objective 2¹ 'A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management'. These relate to key policy frameworks linked to the main dimensions of the European Green Deal, such as the new National Energy and Climate Plans or the updated Waste Management Plans.

¹ Cohesion policy proposal for 2021-27 legislative framework provides for 5 policy areas, through which the support from the funds is provided.

REGIO is participating in many inter-service groups to implement the various initiatives included in the European Green Deal, such as the revision of the EU energy policy, or the new EU Climate Adaptation Strategy.

REGIO coordinates, with ENV and ENER respectively, the European Network of Environmental Authorities and Managing Authorities and the Energy and Managing Authorities Network. In 2021, the meetings of the two networks will be used to present the contribution of the post-2020 cohesion policy to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal and the implementation of the specific initiatives stemming from it on the ground.

Cohesion policy is the main EU funding instrument for investments in **sustainable energy**, in particular in energy efficiency and renewable energy. This was the case for the 2014-20 programming period and will remain so for 2021-2027. Support to the renovation of buildings (public buildings but also dwellings) will be a key priority. In particular, with the adoption in 2020 of the Commission Communication on a 'Renovation Wave', the role of cohesion policy in supporting energy efficiency in buildings will be further reinforced. In addition, investments in renewables will be mostly targeted at the research development and innovation aspects, such as pilot projects, testing facilities or energy system integration including smart grids and smart energy systems at local level such as new energy carriers such as hydrogen.

The European Green Deal includes various **environmental initiatives**, such as the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy and the Zero-Pollution Ambition (incl. an action plan on water, air and soil). All of these areas are priorities of regional policy. Programming will focus on the shift to a circular economy, promoting green infrastructure in urban areas and prioritising nature-based solutions across the board, improving air quality and continuing to invest in water infrastructure where still needed. As envisaged in the above initiatives, particular attention will be given to the **EU outermost regions** as regards protecting and restoring their ecosystems given their high biodiversity value as well as shaping circular economy solutions tailored to these regions, in co-operation with various DGs.

Cohesion policy is the main EU funding instrument for **climate change adaptation and disaster risk management**. This will continue in 2021-2027 period, where resources programmed in these areas will be included in the calculation of thematic concentration requirements. Attention will be paid to the adoption of the disaster risk management plans in line with the rescEU framework. The investments from the 2021-2027 programmes will need to match the measures included in those plans.

Transport is a key sector for achieving EU key objectives: the European Green Deal includes as a central element the transition towards sustainable and smart mobility.

Regional policy is a key EU instrument for supporting this transition, in particular in Member States and regions where considerable efforts are still needed for developing a modern

transport system (including the outermost regions) and for addressing more decisively issues like environmental protection, road safety, climate change mitigation, poor connectivity which impact adversely social, economic and territorial cohesion.

In 2021, REGIO will aim to finalise the discussions with Member States and regions on programmes including cohesion policy support for transport. REGIO will assess the comprehensive transport plans of Member States and regions seeking cohesion policy support in the next period. REGIO will also discuss the strategic framework for investments into sustainable urban mobility (e.g. sustainable urban mobility plans; integrated strategies for urban development). During these exchanges their alignment and contribution to the Green Deal objectives will be raised.



Specific objective 1.2: Smart specialisation to foster innovation and mobilise research to deliver the European Green Deal

The development and deployment of new technologies are critical to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. This requires innovation to support the greening of the economy and the development of sustainable products and solutions throughout value chains. In 2021, it is key to foster a general integration of green technologies in 2021-2027 programmes through a sufficient amount dedicated to green innovation representing at least 1% of the total ERDF investment in programmes. Under all policy objectives, regional policy will support the delivery of green solutions on the ground.

REGIO will continue to implement the pilot projects on industrial transition targeting green technologies in a number of regions (low-carbon economy, circular economy). The work of the S3 platform will also continue its focus on a number of green tech related areas, in particular through the thematic platform on energy and on industrial modernisation, the latter working on areas such as hydrogen, biomass or sustainable manufacturing.



Specific objective 1.3: Just transition with tailored support to ensure no one is left behind

On the **Just Transition Fund (JTF)** co-legislators reached political agreement in December and the corresponding regulation can enter into force with the rest of the cohesion policy package. REGIO will continue to work with co-legislators on the adoption of the Regulation for the **3rd pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism** (a public sector loan facility from the European Investment Bank).

As part of the Recovery Plan for Europe, political agreement was reached to reinforce the **JTF** to assist Member States in accelerating the transition towards climate neutrality with an overall budget of EUR 17.5 billion for this Fund. The related programmes and priorities,

through which the JTF will be channelled, will therefore have an important impact in the selected territories.

As integral part of the 2021-2027 programmes, high-quality **Territorial Just Transition Plans** (TJTP) outlining the transition process and the social, economic and environmental challenges will be the cornerstone of just transition in Member States and regions. Specific technical assistance is already provided to Member States to help them develop the TJTPs through a call of DG REFORM with strong involvement of REGIO. REGIO will also continue work in close coordination with all relevant services (e.g. DGs ENER, CLIMA, EMPL, GROW, SG etc.) within the technical assistance delivered in this context under the wider umbrella of the Just Transition Platform set up in 2020.

In 2021, REGIO will assess the programmes submitted to the Commission with the corresponding TJTPs by involving and consulting all relevant services. It will ensure their swift adoption to enable the implementation of the JTF without delays. Close and timely coordination with EMPL under the relevant operations will be key to efficient delivery of the JTF priorities taking into account the integrated character of the JTF and the responsibility shared by both services for its effective implementation. REGIO will be responsible for the JTF financial management as Authorising Officer by Delegation (AOD).

The **Just Transition Platform** will be further developed in 2021 through a multi-year technical assistance framework. It builds on and expands the work of the existing coal regions in transition platform and now also covers carbon-intensive regions. The aim is to provide comprehensive support to Member States and regions on just transition. It will include a dedicated webpage (single access point on just transition), specific project and expert databases and a coordinated Commission approach of the various technical assistance streams (managed by REFORM, ENER, REGIO), including the work stream for carbon intensive regions.



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



To help deliver 'A European Green Deal', REGIO foresees a number of communication actions. The [EU Regions Week](#), which received an EMAS prize for its 2019 edition, and already turned fully digital in 2020, will pursue its contribution to the twin – green and digital- transition of our continent, fully exploiting its potential as largest EU annual event dedicated to regional policy and unique communication and networking platform, bringing together regions and cities from all over Europe and beyond, their political representatives, officials, experts, academics and citizens. REGIO will contribute with concrete project examples to the **Green Deal corporate communication campaign** and supplement it with spin-off communication activities illustrating the just transition the EU is determined to facilitate at national and regional level. Finally, REGIO will resonate and amplify in 2021 the communication challenges of the **Green Trip** deployed end 2020 with 15 influencers along 15 routes in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Lithuania and Portugal.

2. General objective: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age

Digital technology is changing the lives of people and businesses. Cohesion policy is a key instrument for making sure that no regions are left behind in this digital transformation and that the entire Union is fit for the digital age. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important to support long-term recovery and the resilience of the economy and society focussing on the green and digital transformations.



Specific objective 2.1: Investments in digitalisation to help digital transformation of businesses and Member States and to benefit citizens

Digital technologies are changing our lives, the way we work, shop, communicate. The COVID-19 outburst accelerated the digital transformation push both in public in private sectors. But the pandemic highlighted the urgency to tackle the digital issues across Europe and its regions as a matter of priority. The competitiveness of European **businesses** clearly depends on their capacity to uptake new digital technologies as well as on quality of digital services provided by the **public sector**. Consequently, REGIO's support on **digital skills** is a key factor that facilitates the uptake of new digital technologies in SMEs and thus helps firms to efficiently embrace the technological change. However, not only the digitalisation of businesses and public administrations, but also education systems will be a key priority. Examples are investments in digital infrastructure, e-skills, e-inclusion, e-governance, business development or intelligent transport solutions.

Regional policy will help to ensure that no one is left behind in the digitisation of our society and economy as Europe is made fit for the digital age by improving the strategic policy frameworks for digital investments and enhancing the **administrative capacities** of national and regional authorities to prepare and manage broadband deployment.

The ERDF will support investments in the development of the broadband network in "white" and "grey" areas, in particular in those Member States where support for broadband deployment has been identified as priority in Annex D of the 2019 European Semester country reports.

Cohesion policy will mitigate regional disparities in the access to broadband infrastructure for citizens and businesses by focussing its co-financing on less-developed Member States and regions as well as on the outermost regions (as envisaged in the strategic partnership with these regions) and other remote areas and islands.

It is expected that REGIO will negotiate targeted support for **broadband deployment** in 12-14 Member States. Funding will be provided through up to 80 mainstream and Interreg programmes. This will allow to tailor cohesion policy support to specific circumstances of Member States and regions and focus on priorities identified in the broadband plans.

REGIO, with the support of relevant line DGs, will assess and discuss with the Member States the national broadband plans.

Regional policy will also support capacity building and cooperation across the EU through a network of national **Broadband Competence Offices**, coordinated by the Network Support Facility and financed from the technical assistance budget of REGIO, AGRI and CNECT. REGIO continues to support and contribute to this facility also from 2021 onwards. Throughout the year, workshops and webinars are planned by the Support Facility.



Specific objective 2.2: Innovative and smart economic transformation across the EU

The main objective for 2021 will be to ensure alignment between the key EU objectives and cohesion policy programmes for the 2021-2027 programming period.

In that respect, REGIO will, on behalf of the Commission, discuss and finalise in 2021 partnership agreements with 27 Member States and around 300 investment and cooperation programmes.

Investments under future policy objective 1, focusing on research and innovation, digitalisation, competitiveness of SMEs and skills for smart specialisation will be a crucial tool for Member States to develop their strategies for economic and digital transformation that will allow them to stay competitive in the fast changing environment, while also achieving climate neutrality by 2050. In reviewing the draft programmes, both during informal and formal negotiations with the Member States, REGIO will ensure that they respect the investment priorities as outlined in the guiding thematic policy paper for policy objective 1. It is important to encourage the Member States to submit the programmes as soon as the legal framework for 2021-2027 period is published.

Apart from the programming documents, REGIO will continue its work with other services and the Member States to facilitate the fulfilment of the enabling condition on smart specialisation linked to the future policy objective 1, focusing on research and innovation, digitalisation, competitiveness of SMEs and skills for smart specialisation.

In order to facilitate the discussions with the Member States, REGIO will continue providing **targeted support** to selected Member States and regions under REGIO pilot projects (high impact actions for regions in industrial transition and support of selected interregional innovation partnerships) or in cooperation with other Commission services (administrative agreements with the JRC on support to smart specialisation).

Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms (Industrial Modernisation, Energy and Agro Food) will continue to promote interregional partnerships to stimulate interregional innovation investments, bringing together researchers, businesses, civil society and public administrations involved in smart specialisation strategies established at national and regional level. Interregional partnerships will continue to reinforce the regional dimension in

creation of strategic value chains for key technologies, e.g. within the framework of European Alliances for batteries and for hydrogen and fuel cell technology. They also support recovery and resilience through the implementation of four new partnerships that focus on the impact of the pandemic in the areas of health, circular economy and tourism.

In order to facilitate the implementation of interregional innovation investment projects, the Commission proposed a new instrument to help EU regions to position themselves in European globally competitive value chains. It builds on a **pilot action on interregional innovation**, which helped regions to build joint co-investment projects in common S3 priority areas and to accelerate commercialisation and scale up of innovation. The new instrument intends to ensure alignment with EU policy priorities and enhance complementarities with actions under other EU programmes and will be managed through an executive agency. The first calls will be published in the second half of 2021.



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



To help deliver 'A Europe Fit for the Digital Age', the following communication actions are foreseen in 2021:

The [open data platform](#) will pursue its real time provision and visualisation offer on financing and achievements under the various programmes of the European Structural and Investment funds.

The [INFOREGIO](#) website will continue to display information on regional and urban development matters on Europa under the coordination of REGIO.

The [EU Regions Week](#) website will offer for one year the replay of the 570 sessions of the 18th fully digital edition dedicated to 'Restart. Europe. Together'. Its promotion will be ensured, including the didactic series "**Together we built Europe**". In parallel, the 19th edition will be prepared and deployed in October 2021, focusing on the themes that have emerged from the consultation of participants of the 18th edition (notably the transition to a more digital Europe), and pursuing our ever closer association of enthusiast young Europeans like high school students part of the 'At the School of Open Cohesion' initiative, Interreg Volunteers Youth and Youth4Regions students in journalism, invited by Commissioner Ferreira to use their power, their digital skills and green aspirations to be the change they wish for Europe ([EU Regions Week "mosquito challenge"](#)).

These young contacts will also be mobilised to contribute stories to "**Stories from the Regions**", which has proven extremely successful and rewarding in the current crisis, where the pandemic allows limited travel possibilities and physical interaction on the ground.

Finally, REGIO will of course also pursue its targeted information and engagement activities with dedicated segments of the population on **social media** through its different linguistic and thematic accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), including sporadic paid content placement.

3. General objective: An Economy that Works for People

REGIO will contribute to building a future-proof economy that works for people and delivers stability, jobs, growth and investment. Regional policy represents almost a quarter of the total EU budget.

The ERDF and the Cohesion Fund play a crucial role in supporting social and territorial cohesion, which represents a particular challenge in the current context and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to ensure the full use of the available funding instruments under both programming periods. The funds should continue to play a key role in supporting Member States and regions' efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, help recovery, and ensure long-term development via the necessary digital and green transformations to overcome the impact of the pandemic. REGIO also stands ready to support Member States in their efforts by providing technical support and measures aimed at administrative capacity building.



Specific objective 3.1: Full, effective and compliant use of funds to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion

Implementation and delivery of our funds and programmes is at the core of REGIO's business and a key to economic recovery in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring quality investment and compliant delivery is essential. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, cohesion policy is crucial to ensuring a balanced recovery, fostering convergence and making sure no one is left behind. Funding from the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the European Union Solidarity Fund plays a central role in the **Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives** (CRII and CRII Plus) launched in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic required exceptional measures adapted to help Member States in coping with the resulting negative effects and focus resources on the most urgent needs (support to health care, working capital in SMEs and short-time work schemes). Member States have been given maximum flexibility. REGIO supports the Member States' efforts in deploying remaining **2014-2020 investments** to address the crisis and has established a rapid procedure for programme amendments.

The **Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU)** continues and extends assistance delivered through CRII and CRII Plus through **crisis repair measures**. This instrument will help to bridge the gap between first crisis response measures and longer-term recovery. For the latter, REGIO will aim at ensuring future-oriented, resilient, green and digital recovery, therefore a joint ambition of the Commission and Member States should be to allocate 25% of REACT EU resources on climate change objectives with both ERDF and ESF type investments contributing to this end. Additional EUR 47.5 billion (in 2018 prices), will be added to the ongoing 2014-2020 cohesion policy programmes, providing vital, rapid and additional support to Member States and regions.

The REACT-EU proposal, adopted by the Commission in May 2020 in the framework of the EU Recovery package already entered into force on 29 December, 2020.

The main priority in 2021 continues to be supporting Member States and regions efforts in making the best use of the funds to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic including through **quick processing of programme modifications** linked to the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives and **programming the additional resources** under REACT-EU. It is likely that the vast majority of REGIO-led 2014-2020 programmes will need to be amended during 2021 to take on board REACT-EU resources. Fast adoption procedures are being put in place to facilitate rapid amendments for REACT-EU.

In parallel, the effective **implementation of the ongoing investments** will continue to support economic, social and territorial development, especially in the regions most affected by the pandemic, paving the way for sustainable recovery and reinforced resilience.

Regular reporting on the progress of implementation of 2014-2020 programmes to the Board of Directors will continue in 2021. Being able to monitor and report how Cohesion policy resources are mobilised and what they deliver on the ground is fundamental, given the important efforts put in place. In this respect, a **list of COVID-19 specific indicators** has been proposed to Member States, encouraging their use when making relevant amendments. Using these indicators will help the programmes and the Commission to track and report on achievements over time. REGIO has also established a dedicated **dashboard**², open to the public, outlining all measures undertaken by Member States in their programmes to fight against the impacts of the pandemic which will be consistently updated. The 2020 annual implementation reports due in May 2021 will build on the COVID-19 indicators and show real progress on the ground of the crisis measures.

REGIO will work closely with co-legislators to ensure that the **legislative framework for cohesion policy 2021-2027** (Common Provisions Regulation, ERDF/CF, Interreg, JTF and European Cross Border Mechanism Regulations) enters into force as soon as possible in 2021. REGIO will also continue to follow closely the final negotiations of other MFF sectoral proposals in the first months of 2021 to ensure coherence and complementarity with cohesion policy investments.

Programming for 2021-2027 needs to progress and possibly finalised in 2021, as these new programmes will play an important role in the long-term recovery of the European economy post COVID-19 pandemic and addressing its social impacts. It is therefore important to maintain the momentum both in Member States and in the Commission to pursue programming and make very significant progress in the coming months still under

² [REGIO dashboard outlining all measures undertaken by Member States to fight against the impacts of the pandemic](#)

the **informal dialogue**, even before the regulatory framework is in force, in order to allow for a critical mass of Partnership Agreements (PA) and programmes of sufficient quality to be adopted next year. This will include working with Member States on the fulfilment of enabling conditions.

The Commission will provide the Member States with the necessary support and finalise the procedures and IT systems to be able to adopt the 2021-2027 programmes very rapidly once the regulations and the MFF legal bases are finalised.

The Commission has put forward a proposal for creating the **Brexit Adjustment Reserve**, worth EUR 5 billion. When the regulation will be adopted by the co-legislators, it will provide support to businesses and employment in the Member States, regions and sectors most affected by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, thus reducing its impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion. It will also assist public administrations for the proper functioning of border, customs, sanitary and phytosanitary controls and to ensure essential services to the citizens and companies affected.

Despite the current difficult circumstances, the Commission will continue monitoring closely that Member States apply the **partnership principle** in a meaningful way in the course of programming. The REGIO Board of Directors will continue to receive regular updates on the progress in negotiations. Using the input collected during a high-level conference in February 2020, REGIO has launched and is implementing pilot actions aimed at promoting involvement of citizens in the design, implementation and monitoring of cohesion policy. REGIO will support the authorities responsible for five cohesion policy programmes (together with OECD), 19 civil society organisations to test and put in action innovative approaches of citizens' participation in projects promoting the objectives of the European Green Deal, sustainable mobility, inclusiveness and fairness of the economy and the society. In 2021, REGIO will also launch a wide action supporting partnership with citizens and civil society in the regions benefiting from the Just Transition Fund, in particular targeting and involving young people whose ownership and active contribution are essential for the success of the transition process.

REGIO will further promote **simplified cost options** (SCOs) widely, through the SCO Network of Practitioners in the Member States and through bilateral contacts with Member State authorities. REGIO will extensively promote the use of SCOs in the new programming period. Trainings will be offered both within the DG and to Member State authorities. Exchange of knowledge among Member States on SCOs using TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer will also be further promoted. REGIO, working closely with EMPL, have revised SCO Guidance for 2014-2020. Once adopted by the Commission, it will be promoted to Member States through the SCO Network. A study on the use of SCOs will also be launched by the end of the 2014-2020 period, to allow for a clear picture of the use of SCOs by Member State in this period. The Commission is also examining the possibility of adopting EU level SCOs in the 2021-2027 period to alleviate administrative burden and ensure legal certainty for Member States.

The use of **financial instruments** and **Invest EU** should be further promoted, where this increases the efficiency and quality of public expenditure and allows to leverage additional public and private investment to deliver on the cohesion objectives. Overall, the increased use of financial instruments will ease access to finance for SMEs, in particular those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective and efficient implementation of cohesion policy requires sufficient **administrative capacity** of authorities managing the funds, beneficiaries and partners. To achieve this and to encourage a more strategic use of technical assistance and capacity building of stakeholders, the legal framework for the period 2021-27 provides the possibility for Member States to develop roadmaps for administrative capacity building. Ten Member States have been recommended to develop such roadmaps in the investment guidance of the 2019 European Semester country reports (Annex D) and it is expected that these Member States will finalise roadmaps in 2021. To support these and other Member States a practical toolkit, explaining step-by-step how to develop a roadmap, is made available. Member States will also continue to benefit from support through other existing capacity development measures/tools, such as TAEX-REGIO Peer2Peer, REGIO Communities of Practitioners, the competency framework and its self-assessment tool for identification of and addressing competency gaps, Integrity Pacts, training sessions on key topics like public procurement, state aid and prevention of fraud and corruption, pilot actions to support citizens' engagement in cohesion policy, etc.

In the period 2021-27 Member States will be fully responsible for project selection and implementation. However the **JASPERS** initiative (TA initiative undertaken jointly with the EIB), embedded in the InvestEU Advisory Hub in the future, will offer tailored assistance to Member States, regions and cities for improving the project pipeline, not only for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, but also for the Just Transition Fund. The purpose will be to address project development challenges and ensure a quick start of the period with the pipeline of mature and high-quality projects. 2021 will however be a transitional year. The current agreement is extended by one year to allow for the negotiation of the new agreement in the course of 2021.

The **Closure Guidelines** 2014-2020 regulate different aspects of the closure of the programmes such as financial management, indicators and performance framework at closure, non-functioning and phasing operations, irregularities and content of the closure documents. The discussion on draft guidelines covering the ERDF, ESF, the Cohesion Fund and EMFF will continue in the framework of the Expert Group on European Structural Investment Funds (EGESIF) early in 2021 with the aim of adoption during 2021.

Ensuring **compliance with applicable rules** by the Member States' authorities under shared management and as a consequence, the legality and regularity of reimbursed expenditure remains a continuous target for REGIO. This includes assessing the reliability of audit opinions and error rates reported by audit authorities, as well as ensuring full closure of previous programming periods, in particular as regards follow-up to non-functioning

projects and suspended operations. In addition, the new rules on conflict of interest need to be applied faithfully by the Member States and REGIO will carry out further audits when it identifies risks are reported in this regard.

Also, REGIO applies a **zero tolerance to fraud and corruption** and will take the necessary measures each time a case is detected through audits or reported by whistle blowers or media, as such fraud or corruption cases not only represent misuse of taxpayer money and run contrary to the rule of law, but also lead to reputation damages and undermine the confidence of citizens in the management of EU funds and the EU in general.

Finally, REGIO will carry out evaluation activities on JASPERS, RTD investments and e-cohesion to provide evidence for policy learning in view of improving cohesion policy implementation and thus contribute to the achievement of this specific objective. REGIO will also produce a staff working document to facilitate Member States' approach to performance, monitoring and evaluation for the 2021-2027 period.



Specific objective 3.2: Complementarity between cohesion policy investments and structural reforms to create conditions for sustainable growth and cohesion

Cohesion policy offers expertise in transition, structural transformation and policy implementation at local level, in cities and in remote areas. It has also helped remove barriers to cohesion policy supported investments through setting the right conditions for growth and job creation. These conditions proved to put in place the necessary strategic plans, enforced horizontal principles, rules or standards, which were essential in ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of the co-financed projects. For the up-coming programming period, the set of 4 horizontal and 16 thematic '**enabling conditions**' streamlines and develops further the legal framework of previous programming period.

Throughout 2021, REGIO will invite Member States during the discussions on future programmes to carry out their self-assessments on the fulfilment of enabling conditions. The Commission will then provide coordinated replies to ensure agreement on the fulfilment or otherwise of each enabling condition. The final assessment of fulfilment will be done during programme adoption.

Structural reforms have much potential to underpin cohesion policy investments, making them more effective. A coherent approach and **coordination between REGIO and REFORM** will continue in 2021 to contribute to identifying the reforms needed for effective investments, making also the reforms more effective. Close coordination to achieve complementarity between structural reforms and cohesion policy investments is of mutual benefit for both services. REGIO will assess requests submitted by Member States under the Technical Support Instrument to improve their capacity to design, develop and implement reforms. The aim of the assessment is to identify synergies and avoiding



overlaps or duplication of effort between cohesion policy investments and support for reforms provided by the Technical Support Instrument.

Specific objective 3.3: Strong alignment between cohesion policy and the European Semester to better address regional investment needs and disparities in Member States

REGIO's enhanced involvement in the European Semester process will continue in 2021. The activities of the European Semester 2021 will be centred on the negotiations and assessment of the Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP) submitted by Member States. REGIO will strive to ensure the complementarity, consistency, coherence and synergy between cohesion policy financing and the RRF by operationalising flows of information and the interaction between the two instruments during the negotiations on the RRP and those on 2021-2027 period (including on the Territorial Just Transition Plans) and REACT-EU programme amendments.

REGIO will be actively involved in the monitoring of the implementation of past country specific recommendations (CSR), in particular regarding the "investment related" 2019 and the 2020 CSRs.

The 2019 European Semester Country Reports gave investment guidance for the cohesion policy funds and the subsequent CSRs included a specific investment-related recommendation. The 2020 CSRs were designed to coordinate the EU economic response to the unprecedented economic shock resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on immediate actions and on measures to restart the economy. In 2021 REGIO will continue assessing the appropriate translation of this guidance in the Partnership Agreements produced by Member States, factoring in the programming of the Recovery and Resilience Plans: this effort will allow to maximise the alignment between cohesion policy and the EU macroeconomic coordination processes within the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

REGIO steered the preparation of the **investment guidance** (Annex D) for the Just Transition Fund within the 2020 European Semester Country Reports of all Member States. The Just Transition Fund will provide targeted support to regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition towards a climate-neutral economy in the EU. Annex D marks the starting point of the dialogue that REGIO will continue to have with the Member States on the programming of the Just Transition Fund and the preparation of the Territorial Just Transition Plans.

Coordination between cohesion policy and the new **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** will need to be continuously ensured, given the substantial support the new facility will provide to reforms and investments in view of safeguarding complementarity with cohesion policy funds. To that end, REGIO has actively contributed to the identification of reform and investment priorities in the Commission country briefs elaborated in the context of the forthcoming Reform and Recovery Plans (RRPs) of the Member States and to the RRP

template and guidance, prepared by SG-RECOVER. REGIO will contribute to the informal discussions with Member States for the preparation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans and will participate in the assessment of the plans submitted. REGIO will assess the contributions to economic, social and territorial cohesion in the concerned Member State and the relations with cohesion policy.



Specific objective 3.4: Investments in health and social care, education, skills, and housing to help address demographic change and social and territorial inequalities and to enhance quality of life

Cohesion policy will have in its 2021-2027 a dedicated policy objective entitled “A more social Europe by implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights”. It provides an overall framework for investments in areas such as, health and social care, education and training, skills, employability, and housing.

The ERDF, which complements the activities financed by the ESF, is investing more than EUR 31 billion in the above areas until 2023. This amount is likely to increase due to the on-going reprogramming of funds to support **health care** in the context of the CRII, CRII Plus and REACT-EU proposal. Further support is planned in the 2021-27 multiannual financial perspective where investments in health may gain further prominence further to co-legislators’ provisional agreement on the corresponding elements of the Commission’s amended proposal presented in the framework of the Recovery package.

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on increasing inequalities in Europe and on the education sector, it is expected that topics such as social services, housing, and education (digitalisation, equipment, infrastructure), will receive increased attention in the post-2020 programmes.

In addition, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgency to address the associated public health crisis, the scope of the **European Union Solidarity Fund** is extended to encompass major public health emergencies. In view of this, in 2021, aid will be awarded to 22 countries that have requested support for COVID-19 related health emergencies.

REGIO will continue to work closely with Member States in the framework of programme negotiations in order to ensure that investments planned in the 2021-27 programming documents in these areas are effective and support necessary structural changes. REGIO will also continue to build its internal knowledge on these topics, using, for example, the established matrix structures within the DG.

As outlined in the **EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025**³, REGIO subscribed to the effective integration of the gender dimension in the ERDF and Cohesion Fund supported

³ [EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 2020 COM\(2020\) 152 final](#) adopted on 5 March

actions. Gender equality has been one of the horizontal principles for cohesion policy and a number of projects have been supported in this area in previous period. This support is proposed to continue in the post-2020 period with appropriate tracking of the gender dimension throughout Union expenditure in programmes. Sharing best practices in the application of gender equality in the cohesion policy programmes and beyond will contribute to the effective implementation of the principle in the 2021-27 programmes.

The ERDF supports measures for effective **integration of migrants and asylum seekers** in the context of thematic objectives on employment, social inclusion and education through broad range of actions ranging from investments in social, health, education, housing and childcare infrastructure, regeneration of deprived urban areas to actions to reduce spatial and educational isolation of migrants, business start-ups. The existing toolkit on the use of EU funds for the integration of people with a migrant background will be updated in early 2021 to take into account the 2021-27 legislative framework, and include good practice examples of integration measures at the local level.

Demographic change and its impacts are a key priority for this Commission. It impacts many policy areas, including regional policy, requiring close cooperation across policy-portfolios. REGIO is closely involved in the work led by the Commission as regards analysing the impact of demographic change on areas and regions disproportionately affected. REGIO has been providing substantial input to the **Report on the impact of demographic change** (adopted in June 2020).



Specific objective 3.5: Effective sustainable urban and territorial development strategies involving local stakeholders and citizens

Integrated urban and territorial aspects have received special attention in the post-2020 period with the proposal of the Commission to dedicate a new policy objective that is not thematic but addresses the challenges faced at local level in a cross-sectoral and integrated manner. REGIO will continue to work closely with Member States in the framework of programme negotiations to ensure that this new policy objective is understood and taken up in the 2021-27 programming documents and that relevant local actors are fully involved throughout the whole policy cycle, including in the planning, decision-making process and implementation of integrated territorial strategies. REGIO will also continue to build its internal knowledge on these topics, using, for example, the established matrix structures within REGIO.

To further help urban, regional and local authorities, REGIO will work in preparing and launching a call for Entrusted Entity to implement the European Urban Initiative (EUI) in 2021. The EUI is part of the cohesion policy legislative proposal for 2021-2027. It is sought to offer coherent support for cities to overcome the current diverse and fragmented landscape of various initiatives, programmes and instruments in support of cities under

cohesion policy. The initiative has two overall aims: (i) to strengthen the integrated and participatory approach to sustainable urban development, and (ii) to provide a stronger link to EU policies, in particular to cohesion policy. It will provide a comprehensive framework building, for example, on the Urban Development Network and the Urban Innovative actions. It will also include support for the implementation of the **Urban Agenda for the EU**. In addition, REGIO will also start support for a mechanism for local authorities on the Transition to Functional Areas. In this context, REGIO will also be a main contributor to the first **New European Bauhaus** initiatives in 2021.

As concerns the most recently set up partnerships on the security of public spaces and culture and cultural heritage, REGIO will support the implementation of the action plans, based on the available resources, and involve input of relevant Commission services. REGIO will also implement a European Parliament (EP) pilot project to support cultural activities in the EU Outermost Regions and Overseas Countries and territories.

REGIO will be supporting territorial, economic and social cohesion in Europe also through the implementation of the four **macro-regional strategies** (MRS), i.e. the EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region, for the Danube Region, for the Adriatic and Ionian Regions and for the Alpine Region. These strategies provide integrated frameworks to address together across borders common challenges faced by a defined geographical area. These strategies cover a wide range of different EU policies and aim to coordinate the efforts of various actors at all governance levels to promote a more balanced development of macro regions.

REGIO will furthermore continue to implement the actions in favour of cross border regions outlined in its 2017 Communication ‘Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions’. Following the success of the pilot initiative ‘b-solutions’ established to identify and remove cross border obstacles (compendium of 43 cases published), more calls for applications will be launched in 2021. Specific work will also be undertaken on the bottlenecks in the provision of cross border public transport services. In 2021, a **Commission report on EU border regions** will be presented, reaffirming that no individual or territory should be left behind. The report will assess how the territorial and socio-economic development of cross border communities/regions can be better supported in the future. It will examine changes achieved since the 2017 Communication and will reflect on the impact of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and how border regions can become better prepared for possible future crisis situations.

To foster the implementation of the **Strategic Partnership with the Outermost Regions**, and of Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) REGIO will continue mainstreaming the outermost regions’ specificities across EU policies and enshrining these regions’ angle in relevant impact assessments, proposals for legislation and policy initiatives. Efforts to implement the strategic partnership will focus on climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, renewable energy, connectivity (digital and transport) and blue economy as well as tourism – in the wider context of supporting the outermost regions’ recovery from the COVID crisis and their transition towards a

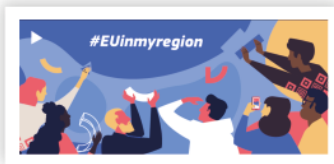
sustainable green and digital economy. REGIO will also address outermost regions' concerns in key sectors such as agriculture, state aid and fisheries.

REGIO will boost co-operation with various DGs on more than twenty Commission proposals for 2021-27 programmes that reflect the outermost regions' specificities. Finally, REGIO is commissioning a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the outermost regions and is supporting a project to help these regions participate in international value chains. Tailor-made support and networking is provided through taskforces, workshops, and the Outermost Regions working group.

Finally, REGIO will continue its involvement in the preparation of **the Communication on long-term vision for rural areas** - a 2021 CWP initiative, led by AGRI, which will go beyond the scope of demography and embrace all relevant aspects for the future of rural areas, including links with other initiatives such as the green deal and the Conference on the Future of Europe.



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



To help deliver ‘An Economy that Works for People’, the following communication actions are foreseen in 2021:

REGIO’s flagship Communication campaign [#EUinmyregion](#) will pursue its objective to increase the visibility of EU-funded projects across Europe, in close partnership with managing authorities and project beneficiaries. In particular, ‘EU in My Region’ (umbrella campaign) will now encompass a series of time-bound, fully-fledged regional campaigns in the vein of the pilot campaign “**EU delivers in the regions**” and activities specifically targeting pupils, teachers and parents in the regions (**‘EUinmyschool’**). Europe’s yearly award to Cohesion-funded projects [RegioStars](#), which demonstrate excellence and new approaches in regional development will be organised again in 2021.



Implementation of information measures promoting cohesion policy will be done through a [call for partnerships with media / academia](#) in full editorial independence.

The communication campaign [Smart Regions](#) will be pursued in collaboration with Euronews to produce and broadcast videos featuring successful cohesion policy projects.



The programme for aspiring journalists “[Youth4Regions](#)” will go on helping students in journalism and young media to discover what the EU is doing in their region, as well as endeavor, in close cooperation with DG EAC, to fill in the training gap young media suffer from when it comes to basic knowledge on the EU.

Communication officers responsible for communicating EU Funds covered by the Common Provisions Regulation (cohesion, maritime and fisheries as well as home affairs funds) will meet in 2021 in the framework of the regular expert group meetings “[INFORM EU](#)” and its different working groups.

The bi-annual **Eurobarometer** survey will assess citizens’ perception of cohesion policy at the beginning of the 2021-2027 period. The findings will help to appraise the impact of information and visibility actions implemented so far and shape future communication strategies.

4. General objective: A Stronger Europe in the World

The objective of REGIO's action in third countries is to contribute to the strategic objectives and priorities of the Commission and EU external relations by strengthening its role through policy dialogues and cooperation with EU strategic partners, enlargement (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, IPA) and neighbouring countries while supporting EU regions and cities.



Specific objective 4.1: Cohesion policy improving the EU's cooperation and integration with neighbouring and enlargement countries by addressing challenges on its external borders and building governance and trust

The EU's cooperation with its neighbouring countries including the countries surrounding the EU outermost regions (in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, in Latin America and the Caribbean), as well as the integration and territorial cooperation with enlargement (IPA) countries represent unique occasions for third countries to work with their neighbouring EU Member States on common challenges and opportunities. REGIO is supporting outermost regions' co-operation with neighbouring third countries – as envisaged in the strategic partnership with these regions – to enhance regional integration and economic growth. REGIO aims to streamline the EU enlargement process in line with proposed simplification measures and strives to be a significant facilitator in the post 2020 IPA III policy clusters on 'Resources, agriculture and cohesion', "Competitiveness and inclusive growth" and "Green agenda and sustainable connectivity" clusters in close coordination with EEAS and other Commission services.

Thanks to the proposed COVID-19 flexibility measures introduced in the 2014-2020 legal framework and through the timely adoption of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), IPA and NEXT legislative proposals for the 2021-2027 period and subsequently the next generation of programmes, REGIO will work hand in hand with neighbours and partners, and will support reaffirming the EU perspective of the Western Balkans.




Specific objective 4.2: Cohesion policy strengthening the EU's external relations by enhancing dialogues and sharing knowledge on urban, regional and territorial matters with strategic partners and Eastern Neighbourhood countries

Regional and urban policy dialogues will continue in 2021 to contribute largely to the EU's global relations with non-EU countries. In concrete terms, this is reflected in the dialogues' conclusions and joint statements that feed the Summits conclusions, strategic policy documents and cooperation agendas setting out the list of the priority sectors for action. By associating other services to the dialogues (e.g. EEAS, DEVCO, FPI) REGIO ensures complementarities and synergies among respective actions, strengthening their impact. In


addition, REGIO steers EU initiatives as the EU-India Smart and Sustainable Urbanisation Partnership.

Through the International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme, which constitutes the second phase of the successful International Urban Cooperation programme (IUC), REGIO contributes to attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the UN New Urban Agenda (NUA) at the subnational level by thematically pairing EU and non-EU cities and regions and promoting cooperation between EU and non-EU cities and regions on specific EU priorities. The European Parliament (EP) pilot project will complement the IUC programme (and will further contribute to the NUA) by covering themes and countries beyond the scope of IURC. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, some delays are possible in the implementation of the EP pilot projects and IURC activities.

 **EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS**



Outermost Regions Forum 2020
TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
20-21 & 23-24 October 2020



COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS

- over 30 EU member states and neighbouring countries
- thousands of km of land and sea borders
- 1 billion €

European Union

To help deliver 'A Stronger Europe in the World', a number of communication actions will be organised in 2021:

The **Annual Interreg event** will allow promotion of multi-level regional cooperation, and resolving of bilateral issues, bringing stability and fostering EU integration in the external border areas.

In addition, the **ENI CBC – Interreg NEXT annual conference** on the cooperation with neighbouring countries on the EU external borders will be held.

Subsequently, whichever the deployment format (digital or in situ), media will be invited as usual to cover the annual **fora of the 4 macro-regional strategies**.

PART 2. Modernising the administration: main outputs for the year

REGIO will concentrate in 2021 on the following key priorities to modernise its way of working and to make the most efficient and effective use of resources in line with the objectives defined in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan:

- **Human resource management:** REGIO will complete developing and start implementing its local HR Strategy addressing key human resources issues such as diversity and inclusion, talent management, learning and development, health and wellbeing, also in relation to the challenges brought by COVID-19.
- **Sound financial management:** REGIO will continue to ensure compliance with the requirements of legality and regularity through robust assurance processes including suitable controls, monitoring and mitigating risks and implementing necessary improvements and reinforcements in order to safeguard the EU funds, as well as applying the required additional financial corrections when a residual total error rate is reported or re-calculated to be above 2% in an accounting year.
- **Fraud risk management:** in line with its Joint Anti-Fraud Strategy, REGIO will continue to implement preventive and corrective actions in its cooperation with Member States and OLAF to ensure that fraud is minimised through appropriate prevention and detection in line with the Commission's zero-tolerance-to-fraud principle.
- **Digital transformation and information management:** REGIO will concentrate its efforts on the preparation and rollout of IT solutions for the new programming period 2021-2027 and the required adaptations related to REACT-EU and contribute to the action plan of the DataStrategy@EC to achieve full compliance with data protection obligations.
- **Sound environmental management:** following its strategy to reduce its carbon footprint, REGIO will continue its efforts to lower its environmental impact.

Furthermore, REGIO's **internal control framework**⁴ supports sound management and decision-making. It notably ensures that risks to the achievement of objectives are taken into account and reduced to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls. REGIO has established an internal control system tailored to its particular circumstances and needs. The effective functioning of the service's internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

⁴ [REGIO's internal control framework Communication C\(2017\)2373](#)

A. Human resource management



REGIO continuously streamlines its working methods, optimises allocation of its workforce and improves its efficiency by clearly establishing measurable targets and demonstrating results.

The outcomes of the **staff satisfaction survey** published in 2019 showed that REGIO scored better, compared to the Commission average, regarding teamwork and commitment to do quality work, the Commission as attractive employer and the staff liking their job. REGIO scored worse in managing the workload and ensuring better life-work balance of staff. As a follow-up to the results, a development plan including 19 actions will continue to be carried out in 2021. A new staff satisfaction survey is planned to be launched by HR in the first quarter of 2021.

A new **HR local strategy** will be developed by end January 2021 followed by its implementation. It will ensure effective management of human resources and the capacity to deliver on the business priorities of REGIO. It will tackle the main issues to be addressed at REGIO level, such as skills and staffing needed to achieve the business goals, culture, talent management, learning and development, diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing fit at work.

The experience with the current COVID-19 pandemic will also impact our local HR strategy. Continued teleworking arrangements and sustained workload put a strain on the resilience and motivation of staff, despite improved digital means for teleworking and teamwork. Fewer opportunities for the teams to meet physically represents a challenge for the coordination and teamwork and the integration of newcomers.

The DG will **monitor the use of the workforce** to ensure adequate staffing of the units and to optimise the use of available job quotas to deliver on the Commission and REGIO priorities as set out in the management plan. The issues such as increased workload and need for internal redeployment, optimal use of job quota and dependency on contract agents and service providers will also be considered in the local HR strategy.

The **mobility exercise** will continue to find new job opportunities for colleagues occupying the same position for at least five years. The objective is to allow the staff to develop new skills and competences. At the same time, it is an opportunity for REGIO to profit from better sharing of ideas and experience.

REGIO reached its target of three **female colleagues appointed for the first time as middle managers** in 2018 and continued to encourage female candidates to apply for vacant management positions. By the end of 2019, five female colleagues were appointed as middle managers. Coaching programmes are offered for female team leaders and deputies to help them advance in their career. In April 2020, the Commission adopted

targets for first female appointments to middle management during 2020-2022⁵. REGIO's target for this period is three first appointments of female middle managers (= 50%).

Particular attention is paid to **diversity and inclusion**. Integration of newcomers will be facilitated by putting more emphasis on eLearning and continued targeted communication.

All these actions will be accompanied by **learning and development** activities included in the annual training plan, which in the future will be linked to the management plan of the DG. In this way, the connection between the HR strategy and the business strategy will be enhanced.

These efforts will be supported through a number of **internal communication** activities, along three strands:

1) Nurture the sense of REGIO's purpose among staff, by reviewing the DG's narrative around the green, digital and fair transition; ensuring 3 REGIO news are systematically displayed on MyIntracomm's view for REGIO staff; and sharing regularly the videos from the 'Stories from the Regions' team in which REGIO colleagues and regional partners take great pride;



2) Foster staff engagement, by continuing to deliver on the 19 actions defined in REGIO's 2019 Development Plan; pursuing the implementation of REGIO's 2020 Equality work plan; and finalising and implementing the bottom-up REGIO local HR strategy;

3) Promote REGIO staff well-being, team spirit and pride in a coronavirus context, promoting virtual gatherings between colleagues (virtual coffees) and capitalising on the momentum raised by the launch of TEAMS to animate a true online community.

B. Sound financial management



Through the single audit approach applied for shared management, REGIO will seek to rely, following careful assessment and reviews, on audit work and opinions reported by audit authorities for each programme, complemented by REGIO's risk-based audits. The assessment of all available audit results leads to an independent Annual Audit Opinion of the Directorate General for each programme. This forms the basis for management opinions by the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation (AOSD). Furthermore, extended deskwork and risk-based audits on the spot, combined with close cooperation and exchanges on audit

⁵ As per SEC(2020)146, the baseline for the first female management target is 1 December 2019. The target will be revised and extended for the period 2023-2024 by January 2023.

methodology, audit tools and legal interpretation will continue to improve the capacity of the national/regional audit authorities. Where the annual risk at payment (residual total error rate) of a programme is not yet <2%, the financial control and correction capacities will assure to bring programme error rates systematically down to <2% at programme closure.

In addition, REGIO will continue to apply a proportionate approach to interruptions and financial corrections, taking into account the assessment of the annual assurance packages and the retention rate on reimbursement of interim payments until accounts are accepted.

As for funds managed through direct management, REGIO will continue to audit a sample of grants to ensure the legality and regularity of the expenditure.

Finally, as for the Urban Innovative action instrument, falling under indirect management a close monitoring of the programme authorities based on the implementation reports and accounts will be maintained and at closure, an audit will be carried out.

C. Fraud risk management



The revised Joint Anti-Fraud Strategy (JAFS) was adopted in December 2019.

It includes an action plan, shared by REGIO, EMPL and MARE. It is a continuation of the fraud prevention and detection already in place. JAFS measures will be taken as a result of the stock-taking study on Member States' compliance with anti-fraud provisions of the Common Provisions

Regulation, the updated Commission anti-fraud strategy and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) report on tackling fraud in Cohesion.

The following actions will be put in place or continued in 2021 to enhance the fraud risk management of REGIO:

- Support Member States in further administrative capacity building in the field of fraud prevention and detection;
- Increase the use by Member States authorities of dedicated data-mining IT tools to prevent and detect potential fraud and conflicts of interests (including by promoting the increased use of its data-mining / data-enrichment system ARACHNE provided free of charge to Member States);
- Encourage the adoption of anti-fraud strategies, including during the #EU Regions Week, and intensify cooperation between national authorities across borders and with stakeholders and the civil society; Contribute to the planned international conference on national anti-fraud strategies organised by OLAF;
- REGIO will also continue to enhance the anti-fraud knowledge, deliver the messages from the JAFS action plan to the authorities and increase cooperation among services, including OLAF, in particular in the framework of the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network and its sub-groups.

D. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation



2021 is a challenging year for REGIO IT as the roll-out of the IT solutions processing the **new programming period 2021-2027** has to be efficiently performed. It requires its highest engagement and flexibility to properly deploy and support the two flagship information systems while ensuring business continuity on current systems as well as providing all needed IT services (e.g. business reports, IT guidance, support for the IT infrastructure etc.).

A further challenge is to continue coordinating together with several services in charge of the co-development of these shared systems:

- **MyWorkPlace**, a multi-services workflow ecosystem offering to REGIO to automate its 2021-2027 processes via this corporate reusable solution (Primary owner: DIGIT);
- **SFC2021** including three modules:
 - **Back-office**, a system supporting the financial management of Funds related to the period 2021-2027 for shared management services⁶ (Primary owner: REGIO).
 - **Front-office**, a portal covering all official exchanges of information between managing authorities and the shared management services (Primary owner: EMPL);
 - **Data Warehouse & Reporting Services**, providing business reporting to all stakeholders including the open data portals of the Commission (Primary owner: REGIO).

In the case that MyWorkPlace would not be fully ready for processing the new programming period, REGIO's Board of Directors have decided to maintain the development of a temporary fall-back solution in WAVE (plan B) for the first processes of the 2021-2027 period.

The performance table in the Annex lists the main IT objectives and targets for 2021 aiming at being operational in time for the first operations and transactions of the 2021-2027 programming period. In this respect, the IT unit will, together with the Business Process Team, prioritise the change management and training/coaching offers during the first semester in order to ensure a seamless rollout to all REGIO users. Additionally, the **Business reporting system** (Launchpad reports and underlying data warehouse) is being adapted to ensure continued provision of common and improved reporting services to the shared management DGs, BUDG and the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) Open Data Portal in alignment with the EC data strategy⁷ and EC data governance⁸. Furthermore,

⁶ The "Shared Management" family encompasses the following DGs: REGIO, AGRI, EMPL, MARE & HOME

⁷ [EC data strategy \(DataStrategy@EC\) – Ares\(2018\) 2075673](#)

the usage of advanced Data Analytics on the existing data, real-time reporting and improved user experience (e.g.: dashboarding) will be explored.

The programming period 2014-2020 IT systems **WAVE** and **SFC2014** will remain subject to simplifications or revisions of existing processes as needed. Moreover, implementation of the financial transactions for 2014-2020 closure in SFC2014 Back-office will begin. However, the priority remains the readiness of the systems supporting the programming period 2021-2027 and the required adaptations related REACT-EU.

The IT unit also ensures the continuity of base line IT services provided to REGIO users as well as the maintenance of **legacy systems**⁹ supporting earlier programming periods. A roadmap for phasing out these applications is being defined in close collaboration with the BPT and the other relevant business stakeholders, by identifying the alternative solutions (e.g. e-Procurement post-award module replacing SysFin and WFS for direct management and a simple substitutions for SysCalc for managing closure pre-2007 etc.).

The new HR Guidelines *on the use of in-house service providers and assimilated*, imposes a Commission wide switch to “extra-muros by default”. In this respect, REGIO will align with other DGs on the implementation of the new HR guidelines and propose to postpone the reduction of intra-muros consultants until it has moved to new premises - expected in 2022.

All the above will be detailed and aligned with the Business Process Team’s work plan in the **IT work plan 2021**, which will be presented for endorsement to the Board of Directors in December 2020. The IT unit will continue throughout the year to align and adapt it to the evolution of the IT priorities.

In the framework of the **corporate IT governance**, REGIO continues as member of the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board (ITCB) and the Extended IT Investments team, representing the AGRI, EMPL, MARE and REFORM. REGIO has together with the shared management services updated the **European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) family IT modernisation plan**¹⁰ in order to further align with the **corporate Digital Solutions Modernisation Plan** and the modernisation contribution of the main IT investments of each DG. In this respect, DIGIT will define the prioritised list of initiatives grouped by clusters and present this to the ITCB by the end of 2020 for approval.

As of 2021 **new guidelines on financing of corporate information technology and cybersecurity** are put in place, based on the co-financing from all operational programmes. The pro-rata based contribution results in a contribution from REGIO of close to EUR 6 million from the Technical Assistance budget.

⁸ [Data governance and data policies at the European Commission - Ares\(2019\)7468514](#)

⁹ WFS, SysFin, AGMS, REGIOVISTA, SFC2007-BO and SysAudit

¹⁰ [EC digital strategy IT modernisation plan 2019 - European Structural Investment Funds \(ESIF\) family contribution - Ares\(2019\)6971840](#)

On request from central services, the **IT security plans** of REGIO's IT systems are being reviewed using the new methodology (ITSRM²) and shall be finalised throughout the year.

Sharing of information and knowledge

RegioWiki constitutes a key enabler for strategic business processes, collaboration and knowledge sharing, such as the automation of country-specific briefings or the co-creation of strategic briefings for the Commissioner and the briefing handbook. Since its opening to all Commission services in 2018, this knowledge management repository and collaboration platform counts more than 700 users in REGIO and a growing number of more than 5,000 users throughout the Commission. Capitalising on this, as well as on the rich country knowledge already shared in RegioWiki, REGIO will continue to contribute to 2020-2021 data, knowledge and information corporate priority '**Enhancing Country Knowledge**'¹¹.

The ambition now is to **bridge the gap between different sources of information, platforms and stakeholders**. To this end, subject to approval by the Board of Directors and the IT Corporate Board, REGIO will expand current pilot project Kohesio in two aspects: it will extend its geographical coverage from 6 to 27 Member States and adapt to prepare encoding future 2021-2027 projects. The aim is to develop a comprehensive knowledge base aggregating, connecting and standardising data and information on all cohesion policy projects, fed with the lists of operations provided by Member States as foreseen by applicable regulatory provisions. The main expected output and benefits of this pilot will be the following:

- To better exploit the information available in the lists of operations, by standardising and improving the quality of the data to achieve better monitoring, evaluation, communication, transparency and decision-making;
- To experiment the use of an open source, proven technology, namely Wikidata (Wikimedia foundation);
- To provide targeted data visualisation, including project geolocation, lists of beneficiaries by countries or graphic exploration by topics;
- To facilitate projects search, reusing structured and standardised taxonomies, allowing to quickly find information on the most important topics (e.g. "Green Deal", "Digital") or policy objectives, categories of intervention, or even Sustainable Development Goals;
- To connect and link information provided by Member States with elements coming from external sources (official repositories of beneficiaries, for instance), or other internal sources, in compliance with personal data protection rules;

¹¹ [Work programme on data, knowledge and information management 2020-2021](#)

- To categorise and connect any data or information regardless of their format (video, audio, photos, documents, people);
- To foster collaboration with regional / local partners: testing user interface and allowing regional and local authorities to enrich and disseminate contents.

This work is done in close collaboration with CNECT, DIGIT D1 (interoperability, scalability and sustainability) and DIGIT D2 (taxonomies and promotion in the dedicated forum).

In parallel, RegioWiki will be enriched with new features, especially regional fiches, and will fully embrace the 2021-2027 legal and policy framework.

Contribution to the action plan of the DataStrategy@EC

REGIO has contributed to the action plan of the DataStrategy@EC, notably by establishing the **inventory of its main data assets**. It will continue in the future, focusing on the following priorities:

- To foster transparency and accessibility of internal data sources, by opening up data sources for sharing and reuse;
- To exploit geo-spatial information, including satellite images;
- To implement the data governance framework, which sets out clear institutional and personal roles, their responsibilities and interdependencies. This already exists within the IT organigram of REGIO but we will ensure that the current framework complies with the principles outlined in the data governance and data policies document.
- To follow the guiding principles of data management, data interoperability, data quality, as well as data protection and information security outlined in the data governance and data policies document.

REGIO will also raise awareness about **data protection**, for example via a data protection module included in newcomers' trainings, targeted informative sessions for units and specific guidance for data breaches, data subject's requests, risk assessments and accountability.

E. Sound environmental management

To contribute to the corporate, EU and global efforts, and to meet the Paris objectives, REGIO has developed a strategy to reduce its carbon-footprint. The strategy was developed in an inclusive manner, building on ideas from many REGIO staff, thanks to the REGIO Green Ambassadors initiative¹² launched in July 2019 inviting REGIO staff to submit innovative ideas that would make REGIO a greener DG.



Greener flagship conferences/events

Drawing on best practice developed in REGIO, our flagship conferences/events aim to become **paperless and plastic-free** events and to minimise their environmental impact. In line with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), event organisers and partners are encouraged to use environmentally friendly materials before and during the event, respecting the paperless and plastic-free guidance. REGIO will encourage EMAS to develop at corporate level a compensation scheme to offset the carbon emissions generated. Drawing on the lessons learnt during the confinement and teleworking period imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the unexpectedly fast acceleration of digitalisation of our ways of doing and interacting, REGIO will further develop the **digitalisation of its events**. This way, we will at the same time save carbon emissions and ensure greater dissemination / resonance and wider participation, addressing the increasing and recurrent request of participants in our events to be able to systematically benefit from a live transmission with the possibility to interact with a wider audience, often physically distant.

Missions/Transport

After a long period without missions in 2020 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, we see a particular need in 2021 to rebuild relationships and trust with partners. Nonetheless, REGIO will target to replace missions where relevant and possible by **video-conferencing**. Several rooms in REGIO have been equipped with videoconferencing tools and guidance to use them have been developed. For necessary missions, the carbon emissions generated will have to be offset as much as possible (see above) and alternatives will be promoted, such as and when relevant, train or organised shared transport¹³. REGIO will further promote the use of public transport or **soft mobility** rather than individual cars to reach events within Brussels and consider public transport for collective events (teambuilding, etc. outside Brussels). REGIO will further promote **telework**, (i.e. after the return to normal post-COVID) in order to reduce emissions from staff's commuting and also to support work-life balance.

¹² The REGIO Green Ambassadors initiative wins one of the 6 prizes of the EC EMAS Awards 2019 in the "most innovative local waste reduction best practices" category.

¹³ This action would/will facilitate offsetting the carbon footprint linked to missions, but would require nevertheless changes in the current corporate financial rules (the current mission guide only allows staff to take the train if this is cheaper than any other transport means).

Resources and waste

Bottled still water will be no longer served in REGIO internal meetings organised in rooms equipped with a water fountain, favouring instead tap water or water from the **water fountains**. Water fountains have been installed in all REGIO big meeting rooms (for more than 20 people) and all staff received a reusable mug and a glass bottle easing refill of water, coffee or tea without resorting to single-use containers. The **use of emails** should be further reduced by promoting **SharePoint or Wiki** instead. Printing could be further reduced by using electronic devices at meetings. Documents should be printed only when necessary. All documents are saved electronically, when possible, paper copies are not kept anymore. **Electronic publications** should be the default. REGIO will shift to exclusively electronic signatures and also pursue a fully paperless approach for those procurement and grants procedures for which corporate IT tools are already available. In addition, the central procurement team in REGIO will promote and encourage the application of the **Green Public Procurement principles** in all tender specifications, selection and award criteria. All exchanges with Member States regarding shared management programmes, which are the bulk of REGIO's activities, are already carried out in a paperless mode through a server called SFC. Individual bins in staff offices have been replaced in 2020 by **waste sorting stations**, reducing our waste substantially and improving the waste sorting quality¹⁴.

F. Examples of initiatives to improve economy and efficiency of financial and non-financial activities

Transnational network of simplified cost options for ERDF and Cohesion Fund practitioners



Simplified cost options (SCO) are one of the most important simplification measures to reduce administrative costs and burden. As recognised by the European Court of Auditors, they are effective in reducing the error rate. They also facilitate access of small beneficiaries to the European Structural and Investment Funds thanks to the simplification of the management process and allow organisations to focus more on the achievement of the objectives.

Despite offering significant reductions in administrative bureaucracy, uptake of SCO varies amongst Member States. Some have embraced the simplification SCOs offer and use them where possible. Others have been reluctant to 'take the leap'. Insufficient experience in designing SCO methodologies is one of the most frequently cited reasons for not taking advantage of this key simplification measure.

¹⁴ Together with other DGs, REGIO was crowned for having completed the most innovative waste reduction actions. Our building BU-1/5/9 (DGs ENV and REGIO) received the award for the most performant buildings in terms of waste reduction.

To respond to this challenge, REGIO put in place the Transnational Network (TN) of SCO ERDF and Cohesion Fund practitioners. The Network acts as a platform for regular exchanges of experience and practices around SCOs and supports the Member States from across the EU in improving the use of SCOs.

The Network members have already met seven times. Around 100 people from managing authorities or coordinating bodies from 27 Member States attended. The national audit authorities have also become part of the network and they will be regularly involved in the works of the upcoming TN meetings. Joint meetings will help establish a common understanding of and exchange views about SCO without breaching independence of audit authorities. REGIO auditors join the TN meetings on a regular basis.

The SCO Network permits exchanges between Member States that have both expertise and hands-on experience in use of SCOs and those that do not. The SCO Network has served to:


- Identify key implementation problems and some potential solutions;
- Map SCOs being used in the Member States in 2014-2020 including SCOs adopted under other Union Policies; and SCOs that Member States have the intention to use in 2021-2027
- Exchange information and national practices through surveys on: (i) mandatory use of SCOs, (ii) gold-plating at national level, (iii) coordinating SCOs at national level, and (iv) harmonization of SCO and state aid provisions;
- Promote peer-to-peer exchanges whereby experience and expertise are transferred amongst Member States;
- Work together on practical examples of calculation methods such as draft budgets or expert judgments and develop a common understanding of how they can be used in practice;
- Provide more information on the design and use of specific SCO, e.g. lump sums or standard scale of unit costs
- Present post-2020 provisions on SCO and address the design of SCO proposals through practical exercises.
- Present the provisions and a practical experience on the use of financing not linked to costs.

There have also been sessions devoted to developing partnerships and assessing examples of good cooperation between managing authorities and audit authorities as key solutions to enhance legal certainty around SCOs.

The Network members have also expressed interest in expanding the scope of the network to include topics of discussion other than SCOs. As a consequence, two TN subgroups have been recently created in order to deal with (a) the possibility of adopting EU level SCOs in the 2021-2027 period and (b) the identification of smarter/innovative procedures and practices in order to bring simplification, eliminate administrative inefficiencies and unnecessary rules in the implementation of the cohesion policy.

ANNEX: Performance tables

Part 1: Delivering on Commission priorities

The icon  refers to an item listed in the Commission Work Programme 2021.

1. General objective: A European Green Deal		
Specific objective 1.1: Investments in climate		<i>Related to spending programme(s): ERDF, CF, JTF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Ensure effective integration of environmental, climate and energy priorities in cohesion policy programmes 2021-2027	Share of reviewed programmes submitted by Member States (environment, climate, energy, smart and sustainable mobility)	100%
Enabling conditions related to National Energy and Climate Plans, disaster risk management plans, waste management plans and comprehensive transport planning put in place	Number of assessed enabling conditions related to energy/climate/water, waste and sustainable transport	Reviewed for all Member States to which these enabling conditions will be applicable
Specific objective 1.2: Mobilising research and innovation		<i>Related to spending programme(s): ERDF, CF, JTF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Initiate general integration of green technologies in programmes	Amount dedicated to green innovation in 2021-27 programmes	At least EUR 2.0 billion
Specific objective 1.3: Just transition		<i>Related to spending programme(s): JTF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
New policy initiatives		
Output	Indicator	Target
Adoption of the Just Transition Fund regulation	Speedy adoption to allow for implementation by Member States as soon as possible.	Q2 2021

Adoption of the regulation and setting up of the Just Transition Mechanism 3 rd pillar	Speedy adoption of the regulation to allow for implementation by Member States as soon as possible.	Q2 2021
	Ensure that all other elements are in place (agreement with EIB signed, Work programme adopted, arrangements with the Agency in place)	Q4 2021
Further development and operation of the Just Transition Platform (technical assistance for the implementation of the Just Transition Mechanism)	Timely implementation of the Technical assistance to manage the Just Transition Platform	TA framework contract for 2020-23 signed by June 2021
Preparation of the Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs)	Share of TJTPs formally submitted by MS	100%
	Share of submitted TJTPs reviewed in a timely manner	100%

External communication actions

Output/ Result	Indicator	Target
Contribution of Cohesion policy to the delivery of Commission political priorities are aggregated and communicated to all citizens in an increasingly transparent and user friendly way	European Week of Regions and Cities N° participants Media reach Satisfaction survey	>10,000 >400 reports >75%
	Percentage of people of the target audience (18-24 years old) being reached by the campaign that have a positive attitude towards the regional EU efforts in sustainability.	60%

General objective 2: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age

Specific objective 2.1: Digital transformation

Related to spending programme(s):
ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2021:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Ensure effective integration of policy objectives related to digitalisation and broadband in 2021-2027 programmes	Share of programmes submitted by Member States reviewed on time	100%
Enabling condition related to national or regional broadband plans put in place	Number of assessed enabling conditions related to broadband	Reviewed for all Member States to which this enabling condition is applicable

Specific objective 2.2: Innovative and smart transformation

Related to spending programme(s):
ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2021:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Initiate a proper uptake of smart specialisation strategies in cohesion policy programmes 2021-2027	Number of assessed enabling conditions related to smart specialisation	Reviewed for all Member States to which this enabling condition is applicable
	Share of reviewed programmes during the informal dialogue with the Member States	100%
Initiate and sustain constructive relationship with regional stakeholders	Set up the Interregional innovation investments instrument in an executive agency (definition and approval of the first biannual work program)	First call Q3 2021

External communication actions

Output/ Result	Indicator	Target
Contribution of Cohesion policy to the delivery of Commission political priorities are aggregated and communicated to all citizens in an increasingly transparent and user friendly way	INFOREGIO Website visits	2 million
	European Structural Investment Funds Open Data Platform: Platform browser page views	>800,000
	Website visits	>90,000
	A Scuola di Open Coesione Number of countries	>5

General objective 3: An Economy that Works for People

Specific objective 3.1: Full, effective and compliant use of funds

Related to spending programme(s)
ERDF, CF, JTF

Main outputs in 2021:

New policy initiatives

Output	Indicator	Target
Adoption of the cohesion policy legislative framework for 2021-27 including changes introduced as follow up to the adjusted Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF) proposal	Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) adopted ERDF/CF regulation adopted Interreg regulation adopted	Achieved by Q2 2021

Evaluations and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
Reporting evidence of cohesion policy contribution to EU development through evaluation activities	Ex-post evaluation of investments in Research and Technological Development (RTD) infrastructures and activities supported by ERDF in the period 2007-2013	Final report by Q3 2021
	Study on beneficiary level monitoring systems and data in Member States (to feed 2014-20 ex-post evaluation)	11 out of 13 deliverables received by end of 2021
	Evaluation of e-cohesion in Member States	Draft final report by Q4 2021
	Evaluation of JASPERS	Staff Working Document by Q2 2021

Initiatives linked to regulatory simplification and burden reduction


Output	Indicator	Target
Facilitating MS use of the 2021-2027 provisions in terms of performance, monitoring and evaluation	Staff Working Document on performance, monitoring and evaluation	Q2

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Senior management is regularly informed about the progress in implementation of the 2014-2020 period, including REACT-EU and CRII amendments	Number of Implementation reports providing comprehensive overview on the state of play of implementation	4
Effective mobilisation and monitoring of cohesion policy resources to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in the context of CRII/CRII+ and REACT EU	Responses to MS questions for interpretation of new legislation and its application provided timely	100% questions answered on time
	Timely adoption (within the regulatory deadline) of programme amendments,	90% of programmes eligible for the rapid adoption procedure adopted/amended within 15 working

	accommodating Member States actions in the framework of CRII and CRII Plus and REACT-EU,	days.
Effective monitoring and reporting of achievements of cohesion policy support to measures addressing the COVID-19 pandemic under CRII and REACT-EU	Update of the COVID-19 Dashboard in the Open Data Platform	12
	Share of CRII and REACT-EU programme amendments reviewed	100%
Adopt and start implementing the Brexit Adjustment Reserve to mitigate the impact on Member States, regions and sectors most affected	Regulation adopted by the co-legislators	Q2 2021
	Pre-financing paid to Member States	Q4 2021
Programming documents submitted by Member States for the 2021-2027 programming period	Number of Partnership Agreements (PA) and mainstream programmes submitted	27 PAs 208 mainstream programmes
	Share of submitted mainstream programmes adopted	50%
	Share of submitted Partnership Agreements adopted	100%
Roadmaps developed in Member States facing administrative capacity building challenges	Number of Member States where roadmaps developed	12
Exchange of experience and expertise, using REGIO Peer2Peer, between staff working in administrations managing the ERDF/Cohesion Fund	Number of participants in TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer exchange events in 2021.	500
Encourage a wider uptake of financial instruments and promote InvestEU	Implementation of the 2021 fi-compass work programme	100%
Ensure effective justification of the forms of support in relation to the use of financial instruments in 2021-2027 programmes	Share of reviewed programmes	100%
Improvement of MS evaluation capacity	Support initiatives carried out through the evaluation helpdesk	10 methodological support meetings 1 summer school Synthesis of all MS evaluations Update of 11 thematic reports and 29 country fact sheets
Publication of the 8th Cohesion Report	Publication of report	End 2021
Simplified cost options promoted	Revised guidelines adopted by the Commission	1

	Number of network meetings organised	3
Ensure quick start of the period with the pipeline of mature and high-quality projects.	Offer tailored assistance to Member States, regions and cities by JASPERS for improving the project pipeline	Negotiate and conclude the future agreement with JASPERS, including the establishment of the work programmes
Ensure effective closure process	Closure Guidelines 2014-2020	Commission decision adopted (after adoption of REACTEU and CPR Regulations)
	Ensure (pre)closure of programmes of previous programming periods by end 2021	100%
Specific objective 3.2: Complementarity with structural reforms		<i>Related to spending programme(s) ERDF, CF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Commission position on fulfilment of enabling conditions	Position established in time for programme adoption	100%
Specific objective 3.3: European semester		<i>Related to spending programme(s) ERDF, CF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Better link between cohesion policy programmes and EU's economic governance	PAs appropriately address relevant Country Specific Recommendations	100%
REGIO contribution to RRF	Assessment of RRFs for which we receive a request from RECOVER/ECFIN	100%
Specific objective 3.4: Demographic and social challenges		<i>Related to spending programme(s) ERDF, CF, JTF, EUSF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
New policy initiatives		
Output	Indicator	Target
Implement actions related to external dimension of REGIO's Equality Work plan 2020-21	Total number of completed actions	11
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target

Finalise process of awarding support to the 22 countries that have requested European Union Solidarity Fund financial assistance for major public health emergencies linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.	Aid granted and final payments made to the countries that have requested EUSF financial assistance for major public health emergencies linked to the COVID-19 pandemic	Aid granted/final payments made to all 22 countries
Specific objective 3.5: Urban and territorial development		<i>Related to spending programme(s) ERDF, CF</i>
Main outputs in 2021:		
New policy initiatives		
Output	Indicator	Target
Long-term vision for rural areas 	Quality contributions submitted on time	100% by Q2 2021 (as per CWP)
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Preparatory work for the setting up of the EUI, including consulting relevant stakeholders and URBACT IV programming	Call for Entrusted Entity launched	Q2 2021
Delivery of 2014-20 Urban Innovative Actions	Number of successfully tested urban innovative solutions	33
Define the scope and the mechanism for support Urban Agenda for the EU	Scoping paper/fiche agreed with Commission services and Member states	Q4 2021
Establish support mechanism for local authorities on the Transition to Functional Areas	Sign the agreement with the WB	Q3 2021
Progress of implementation facilitated and monitored for the 4 EU macro-regional strategies (for the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic and Ionian, the Danube, and the Alpine Regions)	Number of MRS Annual fora organised	4
	Organisation of the annual MRS week including the High-level group meeting of experts	Q1 2021
Progress of actions under Border Focal Point (BFP) action plan: main deliverables	B-solutions: number of obstacles cases identified and associated solutions	25
	Study on cross border public transport services and related obstacles	Final report Q4 2021
Commission report on EU border regions: Commission Report on the implementation of the action	Adoption of Commission report.	Q2 2021

plan outlined in the 2017 Communication “ Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions”, including its alignment with new European priorities		
Share of Interreg programmes 2021-2027 that have planned new specific Interreg objective 1 "better cooperation governance" in their programmes	Share of Interreg programmes/cross border programmes that have included the new specific objective for better cooperation governance in their programmes.	70%
Implementation of the Strategic Partnership with the Outermost Regions through mainstreaming outermost regions' concerns into all relevant EU policies and initiatives.	n° of EU initiatives that reflect outermost regions' specificities/have specific provisions for these regions;	8-10
	n° of Outermost regions' working group meetings (OR and their Member-States);	4-5
	n° of meetings of Outermost regions' Inter-Service Group.	4

External communication actions

Output/ Result	Indicator	Target
Organisation of the 8th Cohesion Forum	Holding of the Forum	End 2021
Reporting evidence of cohesion policy contribution to EU development through external evaluation activities	9th Evaluation Conference on Cohesion Policy	June 2021
Contribution of Cohesion policy to the delivery of Commission political priorities are aggregated and communicated to all citizens in an increasingly transparent and user friendly way	EU in my region Number of physical + digital events organised	>1,000
	EU in my region Number of participants to physical and digital events	>100,000
	RegioStars Number of submitted projects	>200
	RegioStars Number of submitted projects	>200
	Smart Regions Reached audience	>5 million
	INFORM Number of participants	>500
	Youth4Regions Number of applications	>500
	Calls for partnerships with media / academia Number of countries covered	18
	Reach of primary audiences (= broad local population segments who have low awareness of the EU, notably in areas where awareness of EU action in the region is lower than the EU average, the level of positive perception of EU action in the region is low and awareness is relatively low compared to the intensity of the funding)	100 million
	Improvements of Open Data Platform	3 updates to reflect implementation progress

General objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the World

Specific objective: 4.1 Neighbouring and enlargement

Related to spending programme(s):
ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC

Main outputs in 2021:

New policy initiatives

Output	Indicator	Target
Timely preparation and adoption of Interreg NEXT and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) cooperation programmes on EU external borders with enlargement (IPA) and neighbouring countries	Interreg Regulation containing provisions for cooperation on EU external borders with enlargement (IPA) and neighbouring countries adopted	Q2 2021
	Draft multiannual strategic programming documents are prepared and discussed with MS and partner countries	2
	Draft financing agreement templates for the partner countries and Russia is initiated.	3

Specific objective 4.2: Cohesion policy's role in external relations

Related to spending programme(s):
ERDF, CF, ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC

Main outputs in 2021:

New policy initiatives

Output	Indicator	Target
Regional and urban policy dialogues with strategic partners	Number of dialogues including policy conclusions	At least 4 dialogues (most likely Japan, China, India, Peru)
Successful launching of the new International Urban and Regional Cooperation programme (IURC)	Number of cities selected in EU and in 18 non-EU partner countries and number of thematic networking events and webinars, contributions to IURC knowledge sharing platform	At least 64 cities (including 32 EU cities), 12 thematic networking events, 2 newsletters, 2 publications, 2 case studies
Launching of 4 city networks on energy transition, circular economy, integration of migrants and refugees, air quality with EU strategic partners	Number of EU and non-EU cities selected, thematic networks, thematic networking events	At least 14 EU cities and 14 non-EU cities, 4 thematic networks, 8 thematic networking events
Timely preparation and adoption of outermost cooperation programmes with improved participation of third countries	Number of third countries or regional organisations participating in outermost cooperation programmes	Increase by 10%

	Number of Common Draft Guidelines on coordination mechanisms ERDF (Outermost Regions) / NDICI 2021-2027 adopted	1 Common Draft Guidelines
--	---	---------------------------

External communication actions

Output	Indicator	Target
Contribution of Cohesion policy to the delivery of Commission political priorities are aggregated and communicated to all citizens in an increasingly transparent and user friendly way	Annual Interreg Event organised: satisfaction survey	>75%
	Media programmes of the annual fora of the 4 macro-regional strategies: number of journalists attending	>60

Part 2: Modernising the administration

Human resources management

Objective: REGIO employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business

Main outputs in 2021:

Output	Indicator	Target
Monitoring of the Workforce allocation to the priority area	Review of the staff allocation	done
Training plan to be developed by the HR BC	Approval of training plan (based on training needs to be identified by end 2020)	Q1 2021
	Rolling out of training plan 2021	Q1 2021
	Share of e-trainings prepared for REGIO staff based on collected learning needs	80%
	Career development trainings developed at REGIO level with particular focus on female team leaders and deputy heads of units.	2 sessions during 2021 (target: 16 female AD colleagues/year)
Follow-up of Commission Staff Satisfaction Survey 2018 and 2021	Update of the development plan taking into account the results of the Staff Satisfaction Survey carried out in Q1 2021	Q3 2021
HR local strategy of DG REGIO to be developed by the HR BC	Approval of local HR strategy for REGIO by the Board	End January 2021
Implement actions related to the internal dimension of REGIO's Equality Work Plan 2020-21	Total number of completed actions	12
Gender equality in middle management	First female appointments to middle management	Progress in the target for end 2022 (3 first appointments = 50%)

Sound financial management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that cost-effective controls are in place which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions

Main outputs in 2021:

Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Risk at payment Or Residual total error rate	becomes <2% of relevant expenditure
	Estimated risk at closure ¹⁵	remains <2% of relevant expenditure
Efficient controls	Budget execution	100 % of payment appropriations (not including assigned revenue)
	Percentage of payments made within the applicable deadline (subject to budget availabilities)	98%
	Control system able to monitor each programme compliance with the objective of a risk at payment below 2%, and to apply as may be necessary additional financial corrections to bring the programmes' risk below 2%	100% of programmes
Economical controls	Total overall estimated cost of controls (shared, indirect and direct management)	Remains below 0.5% of funds managed
Reliance on the management and control systems	% of all programmes assessed as functioning well or functioning with only some improvements needed ¹⁶	80%

Fraud risk management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS)¹⁷ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction¹⁸ of fraud

Main outputs in 2021:

Output	Indicator	Target
Dissemination of information and training offer to MS on fraud prevention and detection	Number of presentations and trainings given to MS	2
Increase the systematic use of ARACHNE or alternative datamining tools available at	No of active users	1,850
	No of connections	14,000
	% of all programmes use Arachne	55%

¹⁵ Risk at closure is calculated once a year in the AAR: residual total error rate minus the necessary financial correction to bring every residual total error rate down to 2%. This indicator will be updated once a year using the reported estimated risk at closure in the AAR.

¹⁶ Category 1 or 2.

¹⁷ Communication from the Commission "Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget", COM(2019) 176 of 29 April 2019 – 'the CAFS Communication' – and the accompanying action plan, SWD(2019) 170 – 'the CAFS Action Plan'.

¹⁸ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

national level and encourage MS to use exclusion databases such as EDES when selecting beneficiaries of their programmes.		
Organise regular meetings with counterparts from selection, policy and investigative units in OLAF	Number of meetings per year	At least 5 meetings
Financial corrections implemented as a follow-up of financial recommendations in OLAF final reports	% of financial corrections implemented ¹⁹	75%

Digital transformation and information management

Objective: REGIO is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission

Main outputs in 2021:

Output	Indicator	Target
Data standardised and imported in Kohesio	Number of MS for which data are standardised and ingested (2014-2020 period)	27
Systems, processes and reporting tools are efficiently supporting the implementation of 2021-2027 programming period in alignment with BPT work plan	Deliver all MyWorkplace and SFC2021 Back Office features and processes relevant to REGIO contribution and implementation of 2021-2027 programming period	100% of systems functional and operational, allowing for electronic handling of all processes in accordance with the annual IT Work Plan
	Deliver SFC 2021 features (incl. architecture and security), processes (submission and transactions) and reporting services relevant to REGIO contribution and implementation	100% of systems functional and operational, allowing for electronic handling of all processes in accordance with the SFC Steering Committee's roadmap
Systems, processes and reporting tools are efficiently supporting the implementation of 2014-2020 programming period in alignment with BPT work plan and the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe initiative (REACT-EU)	Deliver revised processes and features supporting the 2014-2020 programming period in the REGIO IT systems (in particular for REACT-EU)	100% of systems functional and operational, allowing for electronic handling of all processes in accordance with the annual IT Work Plan

¹⁹ Further to each OLAF case report which includes a financial recommendation, REGIO launches a financial follow-up procedure. This indicator aims at capturing the proportion of the amount corrected compared to the amount recommended in a year (typically for cases closed in the previous year).

Knowledge and information effectively shared and reused within REGIO, in alignment with related corporate policies	Achieve the objectives of the yearly knowledge management plan: Maintain and develop the Knowledge management tool in view of the start of the 2021-2027 funding period	Q4 2021
IT Governance & Strategic Planning, monitoring and reporting duly followed and implemented	Participate to the Corporate IT governance and to the extended IT Investment team by supporting Director A as member on behalf of the "Shared Management" family , and update and implement the IT modernisation plan	Q4 2021
Business reporting system ensures continued provision of common and improved reporting services	Requested reporting services prioritised by Business Managers Finalising the PoC on Advanced Data Analytics on the existing data, real-time reporting and improved user experience (e.g. dashboarding) in alignment with the EC data strategy and EC data governance	Q4 2021
Raise awareness about data protection	Data protection module included in Newcomers' trainings. Targeted informative sessions for units and specific guidance for data breaches, data subject's requests, risk assessments and accountability.	25% of REGIO staff covered by end 2021

Sound environmental management

Objective: REGIO takes full account of its environmental impact in all its actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work

Main results and outputs in 2021:

Output	Indicator	Target
Reducing missions (Promoting videoconferencing)	Number of missions	-10% (baseline 2019)
Digitalisation of events	Number of events	-20% physical presence (baseline 2019) +25% digital attendance (baseline 2019)
Awareness raising campaign to promote the EC guidelines for sustainable meetings and events	Lunchtime session	Q3 2021

Reducing office paper consumption	Number of printed documents, paper publications ordered	-20% (baseline 2019)
Reducing and managing waste	Better sorting and less waste	-20% (baseline 2019)