



Management plan 2024

DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY

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Introduction

The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO) is helping EU regions grow together. Our vision is a Europe where all regions and cities embrace the green and digital transitions together while ensuring lasting improvements in the economy and quality of life for everybody and **leaving no one behind**. Achieving this vision is particularly challenging in the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the ensuing migratory and energy crises and other recent geopolitical challenges. REGIO engages 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, REGIO ensures that the money is well-invested, in line with applicable rules.

The management plan defines the most important outputs for REGIO in 2024. It follows the structure of the strategic plan for the years 2020-2024 and reflects where relevant the priority actions identified in the Commission Work Programme. With political steer by the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, REGIO will aim to realise its objectives.

The **main priorities and challenges** in 2024 will be:

- To provide Member States with support for the successful implementation of the **2021-2027 programmes** and ensure the contribution of Cohesion Policy to the recovery of the EU mid-term, and economic development and convergence of regions over the longer term. A mid-term evaluation of Cohesion Policy funds will be carried out. Complementarities and synergies with investments mobilised through the Recovery and Resilience Facility will be ensured throughout the implementation.
- To accelerate and facilitate the implementation of the **Just Transition Fund** (JTF) to assist the most impacted territories in the shift towards a climate-neutral economy, especially regarding the tight timeline of Next Generation EU (NGEU) resources. This should be achieved by improving the capacity of Member States to select and implement projects. Specific technical assistance will be provided to Member States through various platforms and groups to help them implement the Territorial Just Transition Plans.
- To continue the preparation of the **future Cohesion Policy beyond 2027**, building on the conclusions and analysis of the 9th Cohesion Report  ⁽¹⁾, and considering external contributions such as the outcome of the high-level group set up by the Commissioner, as well as the results of internal working groups.
- To monitor closely the final stages of the implementation of the 2014-2020 period leading to closure, notably as regards the decommitment risk, and provide

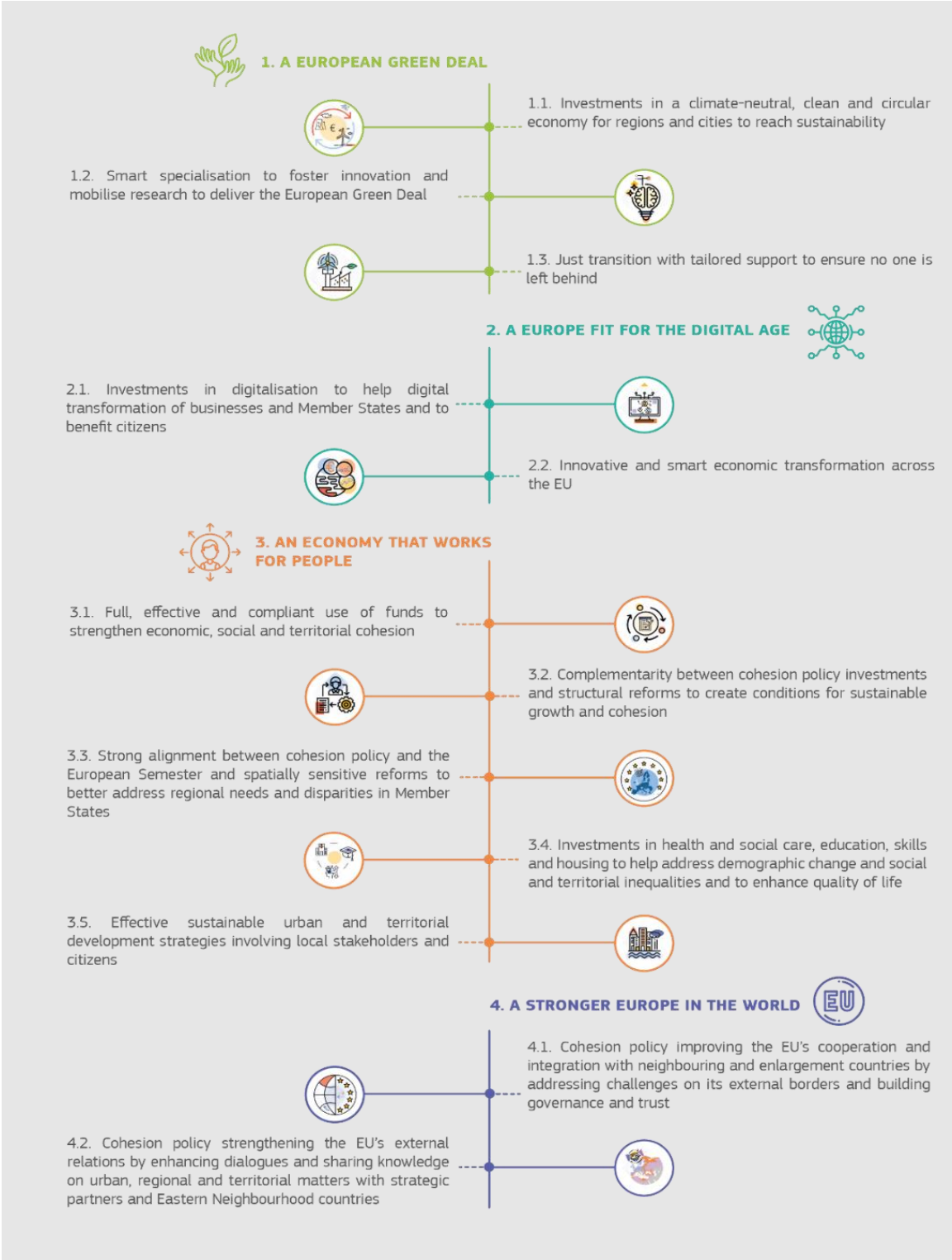
⁽¹⁾ Initiatives that are part of the 2024 Commission Work Programme are marked with 

support to Member States to allow for a timely and efficient **closure of 2014-2020 programmes**.

- If the proposal is adopted, to contribute to the **Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform** (STEP), increasing the strategic independence and European Leadership on critical technologies with support to investments in the relevant STEP sectors at the regional level, by providing a contribution of Cohesion Policy through 2021-2027 programmes to these objectives.
- To promote the proposal for a regulation on **Facilitating Cross-Border Solutions** of December 2023 to address administrative and legal obstacles that cross-border regions are still facing.
- To contribute to the 2024 **European Semester** exercise by analysing regional economic, social and competitiveness dynamics and identifying gaps that hinder sustainable and cohesive growth. Identifying and promoting complementarities will maximise the combined benefit of the Cohesion Policy funds and the **Recovery and Resilience Facility**. REGIO will carry out an assessment of investment needs and reforms at sub-national level to provide guidance to Member States for the mid-term review of the Cohesion Policy programmes. REGIO will continue cooperating with SG RECOVER and ECFIN in the monitoring of the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans.
- To continue close cooperation with **candidate countries for accession to the EU** via their involvement in Interreg programmes, and through discussions, support and administrative capacity building in relation to the EU acquis on regional policy.
- To continue promoting the uptake of the **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) to transform living spaces and practices in various sectors by supporting the preparation of investments in the spirit of NEB and to integrate support to NEB projects in programmes financed by cohesion funding.
- To continue **communicating actively** about Cohesion Policy and its positive impact on people's lives. Against the background of recent geopolitical developments, visibility of the EU's contribution to resilience and reforming of European societies and economies, especially in less advantaged territories, will be important for the overall support of the EU project.

PART 1. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for 2024

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



EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

In 2024 the focus of REGIO communication actions will be on **Cohesion Policy impact and achievements**, delivering on the key EU priorities in the regions, in view of the European Parliament elections in June 2024. The **RegioStars** awards and the **New European Bauhaus Prizes** will allow showcasing successful EU-funded projects.

REGIO will continue deploying the local communication campaign **“Europe in my region”** that creates opportunities to engage with citizens and show what is done near them thanks to EU support. The sub-initiative of **“EU in my school”** makes EU support for the regions tangible and playful for pupils aged 3-18.



Specific communication actions (dedicated press trips, targeted local campaigns)-will be built around the EU funded actions in the **Just Transition** regions, which are territories most affected by the transition towards climate neutrality. Special emphasis will be around the fair and socially equitable aspects of the transition – **leaving no one behind**.



In terms of communication tools, REGIO will pursue its targeted information and engagement activities on **social media** (X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn), including sporadic paid content placement in accordance with corporate guidelines. The **INFOREGIO** website will continue to display multi-lingual information on regional and urban development.

The **Cohesion Data Platform** will pursue its real time provision and visualisation on financing and achievements under Cohesion Policy programmes in 2014-2020 and 2021-2027, including in the form of data stories. The multi-lingual version of the **Kohesio** platform will allow the media, local stakeholders and general public to find and promote projects in their respective territories (now also covering 2021-2027 period projects).

In terms of major events, the **9th Cohesion Forum** on the future is planned for April 2024 and the 22nd edition of the **EU week for cities and regions** will take place in October in Brussels bringing together stakeholders and implementors of Cohesion Policy to share experiences and to find solutions to common challenges.



In terms of media activities, the promotion of Cohesion Policy will be carried out through **partnerships with national and local media**. The TV magazine **Smart Regions** will be pursued in collaboration with Euronews to produce and broadcast videos featuring successful innovative Cohesion Policy projects.



The **media calls**, the programme for aspiring journalists **Youth4Regions** and the **Megalizzi-Niedzielski prize** will further support media pluralism, by supporting media outlets to produce and disseminate content linked to Cohesion Policy, or by helping students in journalism and young media to discover what the EU is doing in their region. **Media Trips** to Brussels dedicated to local journalists to get trained on Cohesion Policy and dedicated **Media programmes** for journalists to follow major events organised by

REGIO will complete the wide range of activities. Finally, the **new course on Journalism & Cohesion Policy** for journalism students will keep running for the whole year, in collaboration with a network of EU universities.

1. General objective: A European Green Deal

REGIO will continue its efforts to ensure that the green transition is done in a just, smart and inclusive way, leaving nobody and nowhere behind, while also engaging actively with our third country partners to foster green growth. Cohesion Policy funds support 11 of the 17 UN **Sustainable Development Goals** ⁽²⁾.

In 2021-2027, the amount dedicated to a greener Europe represents almost EUR 138 ⁽³⁾ billion plus 18.5 billion ⁽⁴⁾ for just transition, illustrating the importance attached to investments into the European Green Deal.



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

Regional policy ⁽⁵⁾ and its funds will be a key instrument for supporting the delivery on the ground of the European Green Deal and related initiatives in 2024. To this end, one of REGIO's main priorities of this period is to invest in the twin green and digital transformation to build a more sustainable and resilient Europe for the next generation.

REGIO will continue to discuss internally, through its matrix structure, energy, climate change, environment (including the Do No Significant Harm principle), just transition, sustainable and smart mobility, digitalisation, innovation and industrial policy to foster thematic coordination and the translation of Commission priorities into Cohesion Policy investments. REGIO will also continue facilitating the fulfilment of the **enabling conditions** for Cohesion Policy objective 2 ⁽⁶⁾, relating to the Green Deal, such as the National Energy and Climate Plans or the updated Waste Management Plans.

REGIO will continue to contribute to industrial policy initiatives to increase the strategic independence of the EU and foster the Green Deal with the deployment of **new clean technologies**. In 2024, REGIO will also pursue the coordination, with ENV and ENER, of the 'European Network of Environmental Authorities and Managing Authorities' and the 'Energy and Managing Authorities Network'.

⁽²⁾ More details on the specific contributions can be found on the [Cohesion Open Data Platform](#).

⁽³⁾ Greener Europe (policy objective 2) + Connected Europe (policy objective 3) – ERDF, CF and Interreg, EU contribution only

⁽⁴⁾ JTF specific objective – EU contribution only

⁽⁵⁾ Where reference is made to 'Regional Policy' in this document activities of REGIO linked to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Cohesion Fund (CF) and Just Transition Fund (JTF) investments are meant. Where 'cohesion policy' is mentioned, reference is made to REGIO and EMPL combined efforts through ERDF, CF, JTF and the European Social Fund (ESF+).

⁽⁶⁾ Cohesion policy for the 2021-2027 legislative framework provides for several policy areas through which the support from the funds is provided. Policy objective 2: "a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility.

In order to improve the effectiveness of environmental, energy and climate investments aimed at transformations that reach long-term sustainability, a dedicated platform, **Cohesion for Transitions (C4T)**, provides technical assistance to Managing Authorities to accelerate implementation of Policy Objective 2 in programmes. This is already helping six regions. The initiative has Working Groups on energy, climate and environment and also taps into academia. The platform hosts a Conference in the spring and a Forum in the autumn.

Cohesion Policy is the main funding instrument under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for investments in **sustainable energy**, in particular in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Support to the renovation of buildings and the promotion of renewable energies are key priorities. In particular, with the Communication on the 'Renovation Wave' initiative, and the REPowerEU plan, the role of Cohesion Policy in supporting **energy efficiency in buildings** has been further reinforced. Investments in renewables will be targeted through research, development, and innovation, such as smart grids, smart energy systems and green hydrogen. Technical assistance, especially in the context of C4T, will be provided to help Member States and regions implement these measures.

Further mainstreaming of the **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** through Cohesion Policy will promote sustainable, inclusive and participative local development. REGIO will build on the results of NEB initiatives under Cohesion Policy so far to keep supporting programme and local authorities in developing NEB projects on the ground, including in mainstreaming cohesion programmes and Interreg. Moreover, in 2024 REGIO will use the New European Bauhaus Prizes competition to gather inspirational examples of projects with a positive transformative impact on sustainability at the local level in less developed and just transition regions. The prizes will welcome for the first-time applications from Ukraine, and two special awards will be presented to Ukrainian applicants, under a 'Special Recognition to Ukraine's Reconstruction and Recovery Effort'.

The European Green Deal includes various **environmental initiatives**, such as the new Circular Economy Action Plan and the Biodiversity Strategy, the Zero-Pollution Ambition, and the new soil strategy. These areas are priorities for REGIO. Implementation of programmes in 2024 will focus on the shift to a circular economy, promoting green infrastructure in urban areas and prioritising nature-based solutions, improving air quality, and continuing to invest in water infrastructure where needed. These initiatives pay particular attention to the EU outermost regions protecting their ecosystems, given their high biodiversity value. Cohesion Policy is also the main EU funding instrument for **climate change adaptation and disaster risk management**. The adoption of the disaster risk management plans will be in line with the RescEU framework ⁽⁷⁾.

The ongoing ex-post **evaluation** of the 2014-2020 ERDF and Cohesion Fund investments is looking into areas of greening the economy. In line with the Better Regulation

⁽⁴⁾ In the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Commission created RescEU to protect citizens from disasters and manage emerging risks.

requirements, an open public consultation on this evaluation was carried out to seek the opinions of stakeholders and civil society on the usefulness and effectiveness of the programmes.

Regional policy is a key instrument for supporting the transition towards **sustainable and smart mobility** ⁽⁸⁾, in particular in Member States and regions where efforts are still needed for developing a modern transport system, including in the outermost regions and for addressing issues like environmental protection, road safety, decarbonisation, climate change mitigation or poor connectivity which impact adversely economic, social, and territorial cohesion.



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 on the ground. This requires the greening of the economy and the development of sustainable products and solutions. REGIO continues strengthening interregional cooperation by connecting regions to **green innovation** through the new Smart Specialisation ⁽⁹⁾ Community of Practice and through Interregional Innovation Investment (I3) Instrument calls published under the 2023-2024 work programme. The work will continue focusing on green technology, 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

To make sure that the Green Deal becomes a reality in all regions, the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) ensures that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy is fair, leaving no one behind. The support from Cohesion Policy, including from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) will be key to reach the targets of climate-neutrality and circular economy by 2050 and contribute to a just transition in the most impacted territories and sectors, also in line with the objectives of the Recovery Plan for Europe.

With the overall envelope of EUR 19.2 bn in current prices **JTF** implementation will need to continue in accelerated pace in 2024 given its shorter implementation cycle (as regards resources from Next Generation EU). Specific technical assistance is provided to Member States to help them implement their **Territorial Just Transition Plans** through the Just Transition Platform.

⁽⁸⁾ In line with its policy objective 3 “a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility”

⁽⁹⁾ The S3 Platform assists EU countries and regions to develop, implement and review their Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3).

The **Just Transition Platform** ⁽¹⁰⁾ (JTP) will continue to operate in 2024 through a multi-annual technical assistance framework. The aim is to provide knowledge and comprehensive support to Member States and coal and carbon-intensive regions covered by the Just Transition Mechanism. This includes a biannual JTP conference, capacity building on the ground for JTF territories (JTP Groundwork technical assistance and JTPeers exchange programme) as well as a dedicated webpage; working groups; case studies and toolkits on just transition and publicly available expert database.

The Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (**JASPERS**) has been assisting Member States to develop a project pipeline which can quickly implement JTF priorities.

The Commission is also implementing the 3rd pillar of the JTM, **Public Sector Loan Facility**, consisting of a grant component managed by the Commission and CINEA and a loan component managed by the EIB. In 2024, REGIO will closely monitor the take-up of the Facility, its advisory services and the projects supported under this facility.

REGIO continues to work closely with ENER, CLIMA, EMPL, GROW, SG in the framework of an inter-service group managed by REGIO.

REGIO has promoted the organisation of decentralised debates on the future of Cohesion Policy, with a set of events having already taken place in several Member States - addressing, inter alia, the **future support to green and climate objectives** and challenges. A formal public consultation is expected to be launched by the end of 2024, with a view to underpinning the impact assessment afferent to the legislative proposals for post-2027.

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Just Transition Platform | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

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

Cohesion Policy is a key instrument for making sure that no region is left behind in this digital transformation and that the entire Union is fit for the digital age. While most investments into digital networks are delivered by market actors, Cohesion Policy fills funding gaps, thus addressing the digital divide from the territorial, economic and social cohesion perspectives.

In 2021-2027, the amount dedicated to digital investments represents almost EUR 76 billion ⁽¹¹⁾ illustrating the importance of Cohesion Policy programme support to making Europe fit for the digital age.



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

The digital transformation in the public and private sectors accelerated in recent years. The competitiveness of **businesses** depends on their capacity to take up new digital technologies and the quality of digital services provided by the public sector. Moreover, the **digitalisation of the public sector** is a key element for speeding up private and public investments, to enable Europe to respond faster to challenges. REGIO's support facilitates the uptake of new digital technologies in SMEs and helps firms embrace technological change. Furthermore, investment in education systems, digital infrastructure, e-skills, e-inclusion, e-governance, or intelligent transport solutions are supported to accelerate the modernisation of public services and ensure equal access to online public services.

REGIO will continue to support **administrative capacities** of national and regional authorities to prepare and manage broadband deployment. 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.

A targeted support for **broadband deployment** is present in 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy programmes of 15 Member States, through national, regional and European Territorial Co-operation (Interreg) programmes, tailored to specific local circumstances and focusing on priorities identified in the broadband plans.

REGIO continues supporting capacity building and cooperation through a network of national **Broadband Competence Offices** (BCOs), coordinated by the Network Support Facility, and financed from the technical assistance budget of REGIO, AGRI and CNECT.

⁽¹¹⁾ Smarter Europe (Policy objective 1) – ERDF and Interreg, EU contribution only



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

Investments under policy objective 1 ⁽¹²⁾ will be crucial for Member States to develop their strategies for industrial and digital transformation and to stay innovative and competitive in a fast-changing environment, while also achieving climate-neutrality by 2050. Apart from establishing Smart Specialisation Strategies on regional and national levels that help to improve innovative ecosystems and industrial transformation, for 2021-2027 period, the ERDF offers targeted support to digital skills, including advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, and allows enterprises to address their specific needs.

Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms ⁽¹³⁾ and the Smart Specialisation Community of Practice continue to promote partnerships to stimulate interregional innovation investments, bringing together researchers, businesses, civil society and public administrations. Interregional partnerships will reinforce the creation of strategic value chains for key technologies, e.g. European Alliances for batteries, hydrogen, and fuel cell technology. They also support recovery and resilience through the implementation of four partnerships that focus on health, circular economy, and tourism.

To help regions position themselves in European and globally competitive value chains, the Commission operates the **Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument** ⁽¹⁴⁾. The I3 instrument aligns with EU policy priorities and enhances complementarities with actions under other EU programmes. In 2024, new calls and the support facility for I3 will assist and support innovation actors in less developed regions in building stronger administrative structures and processes.

REGIO is conducting an ex-post **evaluation** of investment projects targeting the provision of information and communication technologies (ICT) co-financed by the ERDF during 2007-2020. Another ex-post evaluation is looking into SME support over the 2014-2020 period. The preliminary results of these studies will be available in the first half of 2024.

⁽¹²⁾ Policy objective 1: “a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity”

⁽¹³⁾ Industrial Modernisation, Energy and Agro Food

⁽¹⁴⁾ [EISMEA : I3 instrument](#)

3. General Objective: An Economy that Works for People

REGIO contributes 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 and plays a crucial role in supporting economic, social, and territorial cohesion through the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the JTF. The funds will continue to play a key role in supporting Member States and regions to achieve inclusive growth, promoting investments necessary for convergence, employment and competitiveness. REGIO also stands ready to support Member States by providing technical support and measures aimed at administrative capacity building.

In 2021-2027, the ERDF amount dedicated to an economy that works for people through its policy objectives 4 and 5 represents almost EUR 44 billion ⁽¹⁵⁾.



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

Implementation and delivery of funds and programmes are at the core of REGIO's business and have been key to economic recovery in times of crisis. Cohesion Policy has proved being crucial to ensuring a balanced recovery, fostering convergence, and making sure no one is left behind. Cohesion Policy had seen several legislative amendments aiming at providing the **flexibility** ⁽¹⁶⁾ and financial mechanisms to address the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent impacts on the economies of the Member States.

2023 was the final year of eligibility for Member States to deliver the remaining investments for the **2014-2020** period at project level ⁽¹⁷⁾, but expenses will continue to be declared to the Commission and paid during 2024. Accordingly, in 2024, REGIO will continue to monitor, regularly report on the financial progress and make estimates on decommitment risk, while preparing for closure. The last annual implementation reports of May 2023 presented the state of play at the end of 2022 and reported on the progress on the ground as regards the indicators. The next and final updates will be available in the final implementation reports at closure in early 2025 or 2026 in some cases if STEP is adopted as proposed by the Commission.

The **Closure Guidelines** for the 2014-2020 period provide a methodological framework that includes the introduction of flexibilities, recommended deadlines and templates to streamline the closure process of programmes. In 2024, REGIO will address early closure

⁽¹⁵⁾ Social Europe (policy objective 4) + Europe closer to citizens (policy objective 5) + Interreg cooperation governance (policy objective 6) – ERDF and Interreg, EU contribution only

⁽¹⁶⁾ In particular, the CARE and FAST-CARE initiatives provide for a 100% co-financing rate and increase prefinancing levels, introduce simplified cost options and allow a more flexible use of the funds. To further address the increased energy costs for vulnerable households and SMEs, SAFE and REPowerEU proposals added further flexibilities for the use of the 2014-2020 cohesion policy funds.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Under Article 65(2) of the Common Provisions Regulation, expenditure can be eligible for a contribution from the Funds only if it has been incurred by a beneficiary and paid by 31 December 2023.

requests for certain programmes. REGIO will also take steps to ensure that training sessions and IT are implemented to prepare Commission services and Member States for the closure of the 2014-2020 period.

2024 is expected to see an acceleration in the implementation of the **2021-2027** Cohesion Policy programmes. The Commission will continue to provide Member States with support for their smooth implementation. The programmes will play an important role in the reduction of regional disparities, long-term recovery and development of the European economy. The REGIO Board of Directors will continue to be regularly updated on the progress of implementation.

The active preparation of the **future Cohesion Policy beyond 2027** will continue in 2024, through several activities. The final report of the high-level group, set up by Commissioner Ferreira, will be published in February. The Communication accompanying the publication of the 9th Cohesion Report is expected to be adopted in March 2024, followed by dedicated discussions at the 9th Cohesion Forum, scheduled for April 2024. In parallel, internal reflections will take place, through 14 dedicated internal working groups, involving colleagues from REGIO and EMPL and the outputs will be presented in a report to the Board of Directors by summer 2024.

The Commission has adopted a proposal, **Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform** (STEP) providing for a contribution of Cohesion Policy through 2021-2027 programmes to support European leadership on critical technologies. Reinforcing regional economic fabrics through investments in future proof industrial technologies will contribute to enhance resilience and therefore to the long term convergence objectives pursued by the policy.

Cohesion Policy funds will stay firmly focused on long-term investments in economic, social, and territorial cohesion, safeguarding future-oriented, resilient, green, and digital investments. REGIO will continue to ensure coherence and complementarity between the funds and their contribution to the Commission objectives as well as the the Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The implementation of the Talent Booster Mechanism stemming from the Communication on "**Harnessing Talent in Europe's Regions**" ⁽¹⁸⁾ will continue in 2024. For example, targeted expert support based on calls for expression of interest will be rolled out to selected EU regions, which are facing a talent development trap ⁽¹⁹⁾. Furthermore, the Harnessing Talent Platform ⁽²⁰⁾ will continue to promote exchange of experiences and

⁽¹⁸⁾ COM/2023/32 final, 17.1.2023: [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Harnessing talent in Europe's regions](#)

⁽¹⁹⁾ More information on calls under Pillar 1 and 2: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform/open-calls_en

⁽²⁰⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en

dissemination of good practices (e.g. through developing an online database, organisation of events). Discussions on health, research and innovation, digital and territorial aspects will be organised in four working groups.

The **Cohesion Open Data Platform** includes detailed investment plans, indicator targets as well as payments made from the 2021-2027 programmes. Project selection, expenditure and progress towards indicator targets will be made available progressively during 2024. The regulatory framework for the 2021-2027 period has also put a greater emphasis on performance. This translates into a simplification of the intervention logic and an improvement of the investment coverage by common indicators for transparency, accountability, monitoring, evaluation and communication purposes.

By end 2024, REGIO will conduct a **mid-term evaluation** of Cohesion Policy funds to report on the progress of implementation, take stock of the key features of the 2021-2027 programming period, and look at how the programming is delivering on emerging challenges.

To confirm the Commission's commitment to mainstream and strengthen the partnership principle, the **European Community of Practice on Partnership** will continue to share good practices on how to make partnerships work in cohesion policy programmes and will reflect on a potential revision of the European code of conduct on partnership. REGIO will also consult organisations at Union level in 2024 through two **CPR partners dialogues** on the implementation of the 2021-2027 programmes.

Effective and efficient implementation of Cohesion Policy requires that the authorities managing the funds, beneficiaries and partners have sufficient **administrative capacity**. In total, 10 Member States were recommended to develop roadmaps for administrative capacity building. In 2024 they will continue to implement the actions included in the roadmaps. In early 2024 a study will be launched to analyse the work done, draw conclusions on and identify good practices in Member States where roadmaps exist.

Additionally, a study on the organisational structures of managing authorities 2000-2020 will be finalised. A pilot action on support to beneficiaries will be implemented in cooperation with the OECD throughout the year, with finalisation expected in April 2025. Member States will also continue to benefit from other tools such as the **TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer** exchange instrument, the **REGIO Peer2Peer Communities** for networking, the competency framework and the administrative capacity building self-assessment instrument that helps managing authorities to measure their strengths and weaknesses and assess progress over time. Further support includes training sessions on public procurement, state aid, prevention of fraud and corruption, Integrity Pacts, and citizens' engagement in Cohesion Policy, and an online 'EU Funds Anti-fraud Knowledge and Resource Centre'.

REGIO is preparing a plan to simplify and rationalise the **reporting requirements** and reduce related burden on businesses and national administrations without undermining the policy objectives. The plan will include a list of concrete measures planned for 2024

and beyond to progress towards the goal of 25% reduction of such burden. For example, the discontinuation of the annual implementation report has shifted the heavy reporting burden for Member States to electronic data transmission through the Open Data Platform. REGIO will also carry out a study in 2024 to assess administrative costs and burden in the management of the Common Provisions Regulation Funds 2021-2027. The results will be available in 2025.

REGIO will continue to promote **simplified cost options** (SCOs), **financing not linked to costs** (FNLC) and, more generally, simplification of the Cohesion Policy implementation in close cooperation with EMPL, through the REGIO Transnational Network of Simplification and bilateral contacts with Member States. Exchange of knowledge on SCOs and FNLC will be further promoted. A REGIO study on the uptake of SCOs in 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 across the EU will collect specific data from all Member States, provide lessons learned and key recommendations for improving the use of SCO/FNLC.

The use of **financial instruments** and InvestEU will be further fostered, where this increases the efficiency and quality of public expenditure and allows to leverage additional public and private investment to deliver cohesion objectives. Overall, the increased use of financial instruments will ease access to finance for SMEs and will contribute to the climate and digital transition of the EU economy.

The **JASPERS** technical assistance embedded in the InvestEU Advisory Hub, will continue to offer tailored assistance to Member States, regions, and cities for improving the project pipeline for the ERDF the Cohesion Fund and the JTF. The purpose is to address challenges and support the development of a pipeline of mature and high-quality projects. To this end, country work programmes agreed between the Commission, JASPERS and the Member States guide JASPERS' work. In addition, a review of JASPERS assistance will be carried out by end March 2024.

The **European Solidarity Fund** (EUSF) will continue to provide relief for damages caused by natural disasters in line with available budget. In 2024, seven Member States will continue implementing their planned recovery measures assisted under the EUSF (Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Luxembourg as regards floods in July 2021; Spain and Greece as concerns regional disasters in the same year). Several beneficiaries of EUSF support will start implementation of recovery measures in 2024 (in relation to the drought in Romania in 2022 and the floods in the Marche region in Italy in September 2022). In October 2023, the EP and Council approved EUR 400 million of EUSF assistance to Türkiye following the earthquakes in February 2023. The implementing decision was adopted in November. The payment to Türkiye will be executed after signature of the bilateral agreement, expected at the beginning of 2024.

Additionally, two Member States received advance payments from the EUSF in 2023 (floods in the Emilia Romagna region in Italy and Slovenia in the same year) for which the full EUSF support will be determined in 2024, according to budgetary availability.

The **Brexit Adjustment Reserve** (BAR), with an initial provisional allocation of EUR 5.5 bn (EUR 3.4 bn after transfers) is to provide support to regions and sectors that are worst affected by the withdrawal of the UK, and thus mitigate the impact on economic, social, and territorial cohesion. Given implementation challenges, transfers from BAR to REPowerEU were allowed in the amended Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) regulation of 2023. A majority of Member States used this transfer option equalling EUR 2.1 bn. By June 2024, The Commission will inform the European Parliament and the Council about the state of play of the BAR implementation. In September 2024 17 Member States are expected to submit an application for a financial contribution from the Reserve concerning the measures carried out. This will form the basis for the Commission's assessment on eligible expenditure and the release of the residual funding in the course of 2025.

Compliance with applicable rules, including legality and regularity of reimbursed expenditure by the Member States' authorities under shared management remains a continuous objective for REGIO. This includes assessing the reliability of audit opinions and error rates, joint assessment of root causes of errors as well as ensuring full closure of the remaining programmes of previous programming periods, in particular as regards follow-up to non-functioning projects and suspended operations. The rules on conflict of interest need to be applied by the Member States. The REGIO-EMPL Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion (DAC) will carry out thematic audits or preventive targeted closure audits to address specific remaining risks. For the 2021-2027 period, the DAC will also carry out several preventive system audits.

REGIO applies a policy of **zero tolerance to fraud and corruption** and will take the necessary measures for every case detected through audits or reported by whistle-blowers or media, such as fraud or corruption cases. These represent misappropriation of taxpayers' money and are damaging to Cohesion Policy investments and undermine the confidence of citizens in the management of EU funds and the EU project in general.

Finally, REGIO will continue with the ex-post **evaluation** of the 2014 -2020 period. This major exercise will continue running over the next two years and be completed by the end of 2025. Through its 13 work packages, this exercise will provide valuable evidence for policy learning to improve Cohesion Policy design as regards the post-2027 policy framework. Already in 2024 first thematic and horizontal lessons learnt will be available.



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. It also helps remove barriers to investments by setting the right conditions for growth and job creation. These conditions enforce horizontal principles and rules or standards which are essential in ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of the co-financed projects. For the 2021-2027 period, the set of four horizontal and 16 thematic **enabling conditions** further streamlines and develops the legal framework of

the previous period. In 2024, REGIO will continue to monitor the fulfilment of enabling conditions in line with the established procedure and monitoring mechanism.

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 2024 to contribute to identifying priority areas for support and reforms needed for effective Cohesion Policy investments. 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 with the aim to identify synergies and avoid overlaps.



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

The REGIO contribution to the 2024 **European Semester** exercise will be geared at analysing regional dynamics in EU countries and emerging investment and subnational reform needs to foster recovery and cohesive growth of EU regions, enhancing complementarities and EU value added of all EU instruments, notably the Recovery and Resilience Facility and Cohesion Policy funds.

REGIO will contribute to the 2024 European Semester **Country Reports**, providing country-specific analysis of socio-economic dynamics in EU countries and regions focusing, when possible, on demographic trends and competitiveness gaps. The analysis will be complemented by an assessment of emerging investment needs and sub-national reform options in relevant areas, in view of providing guidance for the Cohesion Policy mid-term review. REGIO also contributes to the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey and the European Semester autumn/spring package, in particular the chapeau communications.

REGIO will be active in contributing to SG RECOVER and ECFIN activities in the monitoring of the implementation of the **Recovery and Resilience Plans** to ensure coordination and complementarity of the EU instruments and to increase the benefit of the reforms and investments. REGIO will also contribute to the assessment of milestones and targets for the release of RRF payments and to the assessment processes of the amendment proposals of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans.



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 has in the 2021-2027 period a dedicated policy objective 4 - 'a more social and inclusive Europe 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. REGIO will pursue the work with Member

States on programme implementation to ensure that investments planned are effective and address the identified gaps.

Following the principle of ‘no one left behind’, the ERDF will continue to provide important support for **infrastructure investments**, for example, for social inclusion, early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, and tertiary education, and vocational and adult education. This includes digital education, access to the internet and purchase of digital equipment, with a particular attention to marginalised students. In this way, it complements the activities financed by the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and supports the delivery of the action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Digital Education Action Plan, the Skills Agenda, and the European Education Area.

Impact of COVID-19 on inequalities in Europe, as well as the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, raised important **migration challenges** across the EU. As a result, social services, housing, inclusion of marginalised communities, needs of children and education, have received particular attention in the 2021-2027 programmes. REGIO, in cooperation with the World Bank, will finalise in 2024 the overview of poverty mapping methodologies and implement a specific support mechanism to foster impactful investments aimed at integration of marginalised communities.

As outlined in the **EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025** ⁽²¹⁾, REGIO subscribed to the effective integration of the gender dimension in the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund supported actions through sharing best practices, applying gender budgeting, as well as by using the newly developed Regional Gender Equality Monitor. REGIO’s Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan will also include actions promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion in our policy and internally.

Demographic change impacts many policy areas, requiring close cooperation across policy portfolios. The Cohesion Policy framework includes possibilities to address potential effects of demographic trends at different territorial levels, and many Member States included measures to address demographic challenges into their programmes. REGIO continues to work on analysing the impact of demographic change on areas and regions disproportionately affected as a follow-up to the Commission’s reports on the impact of demographic change and Green Paper on ageing, the Communication on “Harnessing Talent in Europe’s regions”, as well as the demography toolbox ⁽²²⁾ from 2023. This includes work with the OECD to analyse the consequences of depopulation and the development of a policy framework to manage a shrinking and ageing population. Finally, REGIO’s working paper on the geography of EU discontent, stressing in particular the rise of discontent in regions experiencing economic stagnation (development trap) will contribute in 2024 to further reinforce the inter-institutional and public awareness of this issue.

⁽²¹⁾ [EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 2020 COM\(2020\) 152 final](#) adopted on 5 March 2021

⁽²²⁾ [Inforegio - Harnessing Talent in Europe: Commission launches the demography toolbox \(europa.eu\)](#)



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 2021-2027 period with a new policy objective 5 ⁽²³⁾ that is not thematic but addresses the challenges faced at local level in a cross-sectoral manner. 12% or EUR 24 billion of the ERDF resources (higher than the mandatory 8% for urban earmarking) will be implemented by cities based on **sustainable urban development strategies**.

In 2024, REGIO will continue to work with the JRC regarding the evidence for place-based policy and investment responses by local authorities. The World Bank joint project on fostering the functional area approach will be completed with a toolkit offering advice for local authorities as regards their involvement throughout the whole policy cycle, including in the planning, decision-making process, and implementation of integrated territorial strategies.

The **European Urban Initiative** (EUI) will evaluate the second call of urban innovative actions dedicated to Greening cities, Sustainable Tourism, Harnessing Talent in Shrinking Cities and will launch another call with new topics of urban innovation. It will also continue to provide support to cities via city-to-city exchanges. Moreover, urban innovations accomplished under 2014-2020 Urban Innovative actions will continue to be capitalised and shared with urban authorities. The EUI will also provide support for the implementation of the **Urban Agenda for the EU** and will support four partnerships between local authorities, Member States, Commission Services and other urban stakeholders in 2024.

Interreg remains a key contributor to territorial development. Focused cross-border cooperation combined with broader transnational programmes provide a targeted territorial approach to cooperation. In 2024, REGIO will build on the faster-than-average start by Interreg programmes to highlight the European benefit that such cooperation delivers.

An **evaluation** of Interreg activities is being conducted within the context of the 2014-2020 ex-post evaluation. It will assess the efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, relevance and EU benefit of the programmes subscribed to the European Territorial Cooperation objective. It considers in particular internal cross-border, transnational, interregional cooperation and cooperation with pre-accession and third countries. The final report is expected by mid-2024. REGIO also launched a study on integrated territorial delivery mechanisms which will present preliminary findings in 2024 and will serve as an input to the overall ex-post evaluation.

REGIO will continue in 2024 with the implementation of the four **macro-regional strategies**, (Baltic Sea Region, Danube Region, Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Alpine

⁽²³⁾ Policy objective 5: 'a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives'

Region). These strategies address common challenges across borders. They cover a wide range of EU policies and aim to coordinate efforts at all governance levels to promote a more balanced development of macro regions. REGIO will also prepare the fifth report on the implementation of macro-regional strategies. In addition, REGIO will complete, in partnership with countries, the revision of the strategy and action plan for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and will continue the revision process for the Alpine Strategy.

REGIO will implement actions in favour of **border regions** on the basis of the Commission report “EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration”, reinforcing the impact of Cross-Border Cooperation. Actions will focus on: institutional cross-border cooperation (e.g. governance); the reduction of legal and administrative obstacles through the **‘b-solutions’** initiative; an improved knowledge of cross-border public services; the promotion of a cross-border labour markets; the contribution of border regions to the European Green Deal; and the involvement of more young people in cross-border activities (e.g. through the **Interreg Volunteer Youth** initiative). However, cross-border regions still face administrative and legal obstacles that hamper EU integration and limit economic potential. REGIO will promote the proposal for a regulation on **Facilitating Cross-Border Solutions** ⁽²⁴⁾ of December 2023 to address these challenges.

REGIO will continue integrating the **outermost regions’** specificities across EU policies in relevant impact assessments, proposals for legislation and policy initiatives. REGIO will further pursue close co-operation with all Commission services to implement the actions of the Communication on the EU outermost regions” ⁽²⁵⁾ and to deliver opportunities for these regions across EU funds and programmes, supported by a dedicated inter-service group. In this context, REGIO will prepare a report to the EP and Council, for adoption in autumn 2024, to take stock of progress made in EU policy for the outermost regions.

REGIO will also hold the **formal dialogue with each outermost region** to support the implementation of these regions’ development strategies, discuss solutions across policies and monitor progress. REGIO will roll out projects exclusively for these regions, including a pilot advisory tool to help outermost regions benefit from EU tools and programmes and a grant scheme for projects by young people; and conclude a series of workshops on competitive EU programmes and a study on access to basic needs in these regions.

REGIO and AGRI co-lead the implementation of the Commission Communication on a **Long-Term Vision for the EU’s Rural Areas** (LTVRA) ⁽²⁶⁾. In 2024, REGIO will contribute to the drafting and publication of the report on the delivery of the LTVRA, including the state of play of the Commission Rural Action Plan and the stocktaking on Cohesion Policy contribution to rural areas, strengthening the Rural Pact take-up in Member States, holding the 2024 Rural Pact conference and continue the facilitation of the Rural Pact Coordination Group.

⁽²⁴⁾ [Inforegio](#)

⁽²⁵⁾ COM(2022)198 of May 2022

⁽²⁶⁾ COM(2021)345 of June 2021

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 and neighbouring countries while supporting EU regions and cities.

In 2021-2027, the amount dedicated to this general objective represents EUR 1.5 billion ⁽²⁷⁾, illustrating REGIO's commitment to investments for a stronger Europe in the World.



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 **neighbours**, including with the countries neighbouring the outermost regions, as well as the integration and territorial cooperation work with **enlargement countries**, represent unique chances for third countries to work with Member States on common challenges and opportunities. In 2024, the focus will be on building on the successful start of the 2021-2027 Interreg programmes with external partners. REGIO will look to encourage border facilitation and Solidarity Lane measures on the EU's eastern borders and maintain the high levels of participation seen in the first calls for projects from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in particular. REGIO will also continue support for expanding the coordination of cooperation actions in the Southern Neighbourhood.

REGIO supports the EU **enlargement** process by strengthening administrative capacity building of candidate countries and offering an opportunity to work through Interreg programmes in shared management. This is done in close coordination with the European External Action Service and other Commission services. In 2024, EU enlargement activities will continue to gain momentum, especially following the adoption of the Commission's 2023 Enlargement package last November, recommending accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova. Screening reports on the regional policy chapter of the *acquis* will be prepared with Albania and North Macedonia.



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

⁽²⁷⁾ Policy objectives cooperation governance (policy objective 6) and a safer and more secure Europe (policy objective 7) – Interreg, EU contribution only

Regional and urban **policy dialogues** will continue in 2024 to contribute to global relations with non-EU countries. By associating other services to the dialogues (e.g., EEAS, INTPA, FPI), REGIO ensures complementarities and synergies among actions, strengthening their impact. In addition, REGIO steers EU initiatives such as the EU-India Smart and Sustainable Urbanisation Partnership or the EU-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Policy Cooperation.

Through the **International Urban and Regional Cooperation** (IURC) programme, recently extended until 2027, REGIO implements the UN New Urban Agenda at subnational level by thematically pairing EU and non-EU (from Americas, Asia and Australasia) cities and regions and promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange on specific EU priorities. The new Arctic urban/regional cooperation project (funded by FPI) will continue implementation in 2024 involving EU and non-EU cities/towns to promote collaborative regional efforts to address common sustainable development challenges.

In the framework of the UN **New Urban Agenda**, REGIO will continue to deliver on the six voluntary commitments of the EU and its Member States that relate to its mandate (Renewed Urban Agenda for the EU, Degree of Urbanisation, International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme, EU support to external cooperation and partnership, European mission on climate-neutral and smart cities, the NEB). REGIO will coordinate the participation of the Commission to the World Urban Forum 12 in Cairo in November 2024. REGIO will also contribute to the Italian Presidency of G7 in 2024 in the area of sustainable urban development.

Finally, REGIO will continue steering the implementation of the two **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) strategic action plans 2040 on sustainable urban development and affordable housing and collaborate with the UfM Secretariat in devising an implementation plan of the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the third UfM Ministerial meeting on urban development in Zagreb in 2023.

PART 2. Modernising the administration: main outputs for 2024

REGIO will continue in 2024 to modernise and adapt to the new ways 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.

The **internal control framework** ⁽²⁸⁾ 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 characteristics and circumstances. The effective functioning of REGIO'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.

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.

As a follow-up of the 2021 **staff satisfaction survey**, REGIO reviewed its local HR strategy and aligned it to the corporate one. The local HR strategy has 114 actions including 8 sub actions, the majority of which have been implemented. REGIO will also continue its actions to increase staff engagement.

In 2024, REGIO will continue **monitoring of staff levels** to ensure adequate staffing of the units and to optimise the use of available job quotas to deliver on the Commission's priorities. Issues, such as increased workload, need for internal redeployment and optimal use of job quotas and will also be closely followed.

Mobility will continue to allow colleagues to benefit from new job opportunities in REGIO. The objective is also to allow REGIO staff to develop new skills and competences. At the same time, it is an opportunity for REGIO to benefit from the sharing of competences and experience.

The Commission adopted targets for **first female appointments** to middle management during the 2023-2024 period. In 2024, REGIO will aim to reach and maintain gender parity (48% at end-2023) in line with the new objectives agreed at Commission level. One of the actions that will help contribute towards reaching the target is the Female Talent Development Programme. Following a targeted call to eligible

⁽²⁸⁾ [Communication C\(2017\)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework](#)

colleagues, there was an increase in the interest for the programme compared to previous years, evident in the number of applications received for the ongoing exercise.

Again in 2024, particular attention is paid to **diversity and inclusion**. REGIO applies a policy of equal opportunities and non-discrimination and aims to be at the forefront of Commission services in mainstreaming equality, enhancing diversity, and ensuring inclusiveness in the workplace. Integration of newcomers is facilitated by eLearning and continued targeted communication. REGIO will also follow up the results of the July 2023 survey on its Charter for a smart, equal, and inclusive workplace implemented since May 2022.

In 2024, these actions will be accompanied by learning and development (L&D) activities included in the annual **Training plan**, which is linked to the management plan, as well as the **L&D Toolkit** (Learning Paths, Fiche Metier, and Competency Maps) which will be updated to reflect current needs.

These efforts will be supported through **internal communication** activities along three strands:

- Strengthening staff motivation and commitment to REGIO's values and political mission through improved internal communication, for example, by sharing regularly the videos from the 'Stories from the Regions', an initiative in which REGIO colleagues and regional partners take great pride;
- Fostering staff engagement by continuing to deliver on the actions defined in the bottom-up REGIO local HR strategy, including REGIO's Equality mainstreaming work plan, and by encouraging staff to act as Staff Ambassadors and to vote in the June 2024 European elections;
- Promoting REGIO staff well-being and team spirit in a flexible working environment.

B. Sound financial management



For shared management programmes, through the **single audit approach**, the Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion (DAC) of REGIO and EMPL will rely on the audit work and opinions reported by audit authorities of the Member States, following careful assessment and reviews of their reported audit results and conclusions. Complementing or adjusting this information with results from its own risk-based audits, the DAC will provide assurance to the Director General on payments made in the year. The assessment of all available audit results will lead to an independent annual audit opinion of the Directorate General for each Cohesion Policy programme. Furthermore, detailed desk reviews and risk-based on-the-spot audits, combined with close cooperation and exchanges on audit methodology, tools and legal interpretation will continue improving the effectiveness of the national and regional audit authorities.

Concerning the 2014-2020 period, where the annual risk at payment (residual total error rate) of a programme is not yet below 2%, the financial control and corrective capacities will bring programme residual error rates systematically down to 2% or less at closure (and following, for the last accounting year, the assessment of legality and regularity). The DAC will also carry out thematic audits or preventive targeted closure audits to address specific remaining risks before the submission of the last assurance packages by programme authorities.

As for the 2021-2027 period, the DAC will carry out a number of preventive system audits to verify that new (parts of) systems and authorities / intermediate bodies work effectively and in compliance with applicable requirements. The DAC auditors will also further digitalise audits and make use of the available data in different IT tools (IMS, ARACHNE COMPASS, Kohesio) in order to identify potential risks of conflict of interest, double-funding or fraud or control areas that might require targeted audit action.

REGIO will continue to apply a proportionate approach to **interruptions and financial corrections**, considering the assessment of the annual assurance packages and the retention rates on reimbursement of interim payments until the accounts are accepted. This policy will equally be defined for closure, in relation to the balance of the last accounting year in case serious deficiencies or irregularities remain unsolved. REGIO will also provide support to the managing and audit authorities to improve the functioning of their management and control systems through guidance, targeted support, continuous training, professional development and transnational networks to simplify procedures.

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

Concerning the European Urban Initiative, falling under **indirect management**, a pillar assessment was carried out in 2022 with positive results. The monitoring of the programme authorities, based on annual reporting on implementation, controls and accounts, will continue in 2024.

C. Fraud risk management



The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the **Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy** (CAFS) ⁽²⁹⁾ aimed at the prevention, detection, and correction of fraud.

In relation to shared management, REGIO will continue to implement the **Joint Anti-Fraud Strategy** (JAFS) together with EMPL and MARE.

⁽²⁹⁾ Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget', COM(2019) 196 of 29 April 2019 and the accompanying Action Plan, SWD(2019) 170

The following actions will be put in place or continued in 2024 to enhance the **fraud risk management** of REGIO:

- Support Member States in administrative capacity building on fraud prevention and detection and avoidance of conflict of interests (JAFS, action 1 and CAFS, action 15).
- Continue to implement financial corrections and recover unduly paid amounts following financial recommendations in reports from the European Anti-Fraud Office.
- Increase the capacity building (CAFS action 15) through digitalisation of cohesion funds management, including by further encouraging Member States' authorities to use **dedicated data-mining IT tools** to prevent and detect potential fraud and conflicts of interests (CAFS action 1), including by promoting its data mining / data-enrichment system (ARACHNE) which is provided to the Member States free of charge.
- Encourage Member States to adopt anti-fraud strategies and to intensify cross-border cooperation with other Member States authorities, stakeholders and civil society (JAFS, action 3 and CAFS, action 14).
- Improve anti-fraud knowledge, deliver the messages from the JAFS action plan to the Member States authorities and increase cooperation between Commission departments, in particular in the framework of the Fraud Prevention and Detection Network and its sub-groups (JAFS, action 4 and 5 and CAFS, action 16).
- Follow-up on recommendations in OLAF final case reports.
- Develop efficient and clear communication channels with the European Public Prosecutor's Office to provide the required information for their investigations related to Cohesion Policy.

The JAFS will be aligned to the new action plan of the CAFS and updated accordingly in 2025.

D. Digital transformation and information management

Digital transformation



In 2024 REGIO will continue the delivery of IT services supporting the 2021-2027 programming period, mainly through the development of REGIO's flagship information systems, ensuring the business continuity on existing systems and providing all relevant IT services including business reporting, IT guidance as well as support for the IT infrastructure to stakeholders. In this context, REGIO coordinates several services in charge of the co-development of the shared IT systems shown below, in line with the dual pillar approach:

- **MyWorkplace**, the multi-services workflow ecosystem (Compass Corporate – DIGIT primary owner) offering REGIO the platform for automating its business processes;
- **SFC2021** with its three modules:
 - **Back-office**, (REGIO as primary owner) supporting the financial management of Funds related to the 2021-2027 period for shared management services;
 - **Front-office**, (EMPL as primary owner) covering all official exchanges of between managing authorities and the shared management services;
 - **Data Warehouse and Reporting Services**, (REGIO as primary owner) providing business reporting to all stakeholders and the open data portals of the Commission.

REGIO will prioritise the workflow implementation and related activities (closures, transmission of data, examination of accounts, interruptions, decommitments, and other for both 2014-2020 and 2021-2017 processes) to ensure the successful execution of all business processes. All these activities are detailed in the IT work plan 2024.

In line with *Strategic Objective 2 – Digital-ready EU policymaking* of the new Commission Digital Strategy, REGIO will continue **raising awareness** within the DG by promoting training.

In line with the *Strategic Objective 3 – Empower business-driven digital transformation* of the new Commission Digital Strategy alongside DIGIT's future **BI@EC** and **AI@EC** strategies, **business reporting** will continuously adapt and improve and ensure provisioning of data services to the shared management DGs and the Cohesion Open Data Portal.

In line with the *Strategic Objective 4 - Ensure a seamless digital landscape* of the New Commission Digital Strategy, REGIO will continue to maintain the IT systems supporting the previous programming periods and streamline the IT portfolio by continuing to decommission the legacy systems and managing the on-going processes and financial transactions of the 2014-2020 implementation and the 2007-2013 closure. By employing reusable solutions (e.g. Compass Corporate) and aligning SFC to future corporate SUMMA, REGIO contributes to the implementation of the Dual Pillar approach. In the context of the EC collaboration strategy and the single integrated framework for collaboration, the migration of any remaining REGIO SharePoint sites from SharePoint on premises to **SharePoint online** will be finalised.

REGIO participates in **corporate IT governance** instances and continues to be a member of the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board (ITCB) and the Extended IT Investments team (ITIT) representing the shared management DGs' family (AGRI, EMPL, MARE) and REFORM. In addition, REGIO participates in the Information Management Steering Board (IMSB) and together with AGRI represents the shared management DGs. Last year, REGIO's mandates in the ITCB and IMSB were renewed for two years.

In line with *Strategic Objective 5 - Sustain a green, secure and resilient infrastructure* of the new Commission Digital Strategy the updates and the annual reviews of **IT security plans** are scheduled.

The SUMMA Supervisory Board decided to postpone the go-live of **SUMMA** until January 2025. A major challenge in 2024 will be the integration of the SFC back-offices systems with SUMMA and the migration of all financial processes and data from ABAC to SUMMA. REGIO will focus on adapting IT systems to ensure that all remain functional, operational and integrated with SUMMA, providing business continuity and the same level of automation as was in place when ABAC was the corporate accounting system.

Information and IT security rules

Units will be regularly reminded of the importance of correct filing as well as the appropriate use of **sensitive personal data flags** and the **sensitive markings** in REGIO's Advanced Records System (ARES). Regarding REGIO's filing plan, attention will be paid to limit access when it is necessary. Units are encouraged to use a specific shared drive to keep sensitive non-classified (SNC) information available and safe when registration in Ares is not applicable. SNC documents that need to be sent by email are protected by SECEM2. Functional mailboxes are also equipped with public-key infrastructure.

Data, information and knowledge management

RegioWiki constitutes a key enabler for strategic business processes, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, such as the automation of country-specific briefings or the co-development of strategic briefings for the Commissioner and the briefing handbook. This knowledge management repository and collaboration platform counts more than 700 users in REGIO and more than 5,000 users throughout the Commission, as well as managing authorities.

REGIO will continue to ensure correct **records management**. Paper and electronic files archiving is implemented continuously.

The inventory of preservation needs of information systems (IS) in GovIS2, updated as required by the **Digital Preservation Strategy's** action plan, will be considered when an IS enters the decommissioning phase, such as for example WFS. Guidelines, trainings, monitoring, and a helpdesk are made available regarding the correct use of IS that are integrated to Hermes/Ares/NonCom (HAN). Finally, REGIO ensures constant monitoring of correct validation and registration of outgoing documents in Ares.

REGIO will continue its contribution to the action plan of the **DataStrategy@EC**, by putting in place the DG's data governance board, elaborating the DG's local data strategy, increasing overall data literacy and further enhance its AI capabilities by capitalising on the five AI pilots carried out in 2023. In 2024, it will continue focusing on fostering

transparency and accessibility of internal data sources, exploiting geo-spatial information, implementing the data governance framework and following the guiding principles of data management, interoperability, quality, as well as protection and information security.

Capitalising on this, as well as on the rich country knowledge already shared in RegioWiki, REGIO will continue to contribute to the data, knowledge, and information corporate priority 'Enhancing Country Knowledge'.

Data protection

In 2024, REGIO will continue the implementation of the **Commission Data Protection Action Plan** (30), especially as regards record keeping, agreements with external processors, procedures for data subject rights and allocation of resources for compliance. REGIO complies with the annual review of record keeping via the Data Protection Record Management System and will continue to provide support and guidance to all staff, including DAC, on data protection related issues. Support and guidance to DAC staff is coordinated with EMPL as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between the two DGs. Regarding **awareness raising** activities in 2024, REGIO will organise presentations and trainings to colleagues, publish articles on the intranet and provide updated information in the RegioWiki. Staff will be encouraged to contact the Data Protection Coordinator for advice regarding any issue related to personal data and to follow specialised trainings.

E. Sound environmental management

Physical presence in the Member States and close contacts with stakeholders remain of utmost importance, in order to stay connected to reality on the ground. Nonetheless, with a view to supporting the greening of the Commission to reach climate neutrality by 2030, REGIO continues to be committed to reducing its CO₂ emissions from staff travel. In 2024, REGIO will again make extensive use of **videoconferencing**. Most of REGIO's meeting rooms are equipped accordingly. REGIO will aim to increase staff awareness about the office building's energy consumption, commuting, digital pollution, and waste reduction.

The central procurement team in REGIO will continue promoting and encouraging 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 the SFC system.

⁽³⁰⁾ Commission's Data Protection Action Plan C(2018) 7432 final

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

Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion

The Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion (DAC) was created in 2021 with the aim of merging REGIO and EMPL audit capabilities. DAC is the first-ever Joint Directorate under the oversight of two Directors-General. Through increased synergies between audit teams which have been pooled together and increased efficiencies in audit processes and tools, the DAC is a single audit interlocutor for internal and external stakeholders. Its mission is to contribute to the assurance of both REGIO and EMPL on the proper use of the Union funds assigned under their responsibility and in line with applicable rules, to ensure the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. The DAC is responsible for auditing funds under shared management, namely under Cohesion Policy as well as indirect and direct management.

The majority of audit-related processes carried out by DAC are centrally managed using the MAPAR IT tool. With this tool, audit activities are easily monitored and standardised. Furthermore, the use of MAPAR will be extended to HOME and MARE in 2021-2027, ensuring a further centralisation of audit-related processes in those DGs responsible for implementing funds under the Common Provisions Regulation.

ANNEX: Performance tables - main outputs for 2024

 refers to an item listed in the Commission Work Programme 2024.

Part 1 - Delivering on the Commission's priorities: main outputs for 2023

General objective: A European Green Deal		
Specific Objective: 1.1: Investments in climate		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF</i>		
Main outputs in 2024:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Dissemination of knowledge internally and externally, promoting the effective use of Cohesion Policy Funds to contribute to the implementation of the European Green Deal	Major events covering EU27 with strong MS/stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	> 20
Organisation of NEB Prizes in order to generate, and then be able to promote, the New European Bauhaus values in Cohesion Policy programmes	Organising the NEB Prizes ceremony announcing the winners	Q2 2024
Promoting and implementing the New European Bauhaus values in REGIO led programmes, investments, and initiatives - NEB Mainstreaming	Cohesion Policy programmes launching targeted NEB calls, or calls which include NEB values	10 NEB calls

General objective: A European Green Deal		
Specific Objective: 1.2: Mobilising research and innovation		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF</i>		
Main outputs in 2024:		
Other important outputs		
Output	Indicator	Target
Supporting the Green Deal through interregional innovation projects	% of supported projects by I3 in 2024 that are Green Deal relevant	At least 50%

General objective: A European Green Deal

Specific Objective: 1.3: Just transition

Related to spending programmes: JTF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Further development and operation of the Just Transition Platform on the ground -technical assistance for the implementation of the Just Transition Mechanism in JTF territories	Start of second TA framework contract	Q1 2024
	Number of meetings of JT Platform	2

General objective: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age

Specific Objective: 2.1: Digital transformation

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Dissemination of knowledge internally and externally, promoting the effective use of Cohesion Policy funds to contribute to the implementation of the digital transformation	Major events covering EU27 with strong MS/stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	4

General objective: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age

Specific Objective: 2.2: Innovative and smart transformation

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Dissemination of knowledge internally and externally, promoting the effective use of Cohesion Policy funds to contribute to the implementation of the smart growth objectives	Major events covering EU27 with strong MS/stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	12

General objective: An Economy that Works for People

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

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:


Initiatives linked to regulatory simplification and burden reduction

Output	Indicator	Target
Use of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs) and Financing Not Linked to Costs (FNLC) as method of reimbursement of the Union contribution	Number of Member States with SCOs and FNLC methodologies adopted in their programmes/amendment to programmes	15
Verify the extent of the actual and planned use of SCOs and FNLC, including analysis of the results and benefits achieved, lessons learned and key recommendations for improving and facilitating the use of SCO and FNLC	Study on the uptake of SCO and FNLC for the CPR Funds in the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods	1 report by Q4

Significant evaluations and fitness checks

Output	Indicator	Target
Improvement of Member States' evaluation capacity	Support initiatives carried out through the evaluation helpdesk: 1 summer school	Q4 2024
2014-2020 Ex-post evaluation of Cohesion Policy	Intermediate reports delivered for all Work Packages	Q4 2023
Mid-term evaluation of Cohesion Policy funds (article 45(1) of the CPR)	The evaluation will report on the progress of implementation, take stock of the key features of the 2021-27 programming period, and look at how the programming is delivering on emerging challenges	Q4 2024

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Senior management is regularly informed about the progress in implementation of the 2021-2027 period	Number of implementation reports submitted for discussion at senior management level	4
Preparation of the future Cohesion Policy	Publication of the 9 th cohesion report 	Q1 2024
	Publication of the final report of the high-level group	Q1 2024
	Report to the Board of Directors on the outcome of internal working groups	Q2 2024

Output	Indicator	Target
	Successful organisation of the 9 th Cohesion Forum	Q2 2024
Cohesion Open Data Platform	Updates to reflect implementation progress for all programmes	2 updates linked to the 2021-2027 period (March, September) 3 updates linked to the 2014-2020 period (March, September, December)
	Publication of new or updated data stories on the 2021-2027 programming	10
Encourage a wider uptake of financial instruments and support GUs and Member States in the implementation of financial instruments	Implementation of the 2024 fi-compass work programme; FI-campus conference and MS specific support and other activities throughout the year	Q4 2024
European Community of Practice on Partnership 2021-2027 is functioning, sharing good practices and is producing concrete recommendations for the possible update of the European Code of Conduct on partnership The task forces are established and concrete deliverables are proposed by ECoPP members and reported in the plenary session.	1 physical plenary meeting of ECoPP in Brussels.	Q1 2024
Consulting organisations which represent partners at Union level on the implementation of the programmes. Art 8(5) of the CPR 2021-2027	CPR partners dialogues in 2024	2
Exchange of experience and expertise between staff working in administrations managing the ERDF/Cohesion Fund/JTF using REGIO Peer2Peer+	Number of participants in TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer exchange events in 2024.	>800
Implementation of the strategic training programme for Member State experts in programme authorities on State aid, strategic public procurement, anti-fraud/corruption, Integrity Pacts, citizens engagement in Cohesion Policy etc.	Number of participants trained under the strategic training programme in 2024	400
Offer tailored assistance to Member States, regions and cities by JASPERS for improving the project pipeline in accordance with the priorities of DG REGIO	Number of JASPERS assignment requests validated by geographical units	90
Implementation of the Action Plan designed to address the Internal Audit Service's recommendations following the audit on preparedness for closing the 2014-2020 programming period	Full implementation of the actions contained in the Action Plan, including coordination across Commission services (DG EMPL and DG MARE)	Q4 2024

Output	Indicator	Target
Promotion of Simplified cost options (SCOs) and Financing not linked to costs (FNLC), and, more generally, simplification of the Cohesion Policy implementation	Number of bilateral and multilateral meetings with Member States, including workshops/trainings and meetings of the Transnational Network on Simplification	8

General objective: An Economy that Works for People

Specific Objective: 3.2: Full, effective and compliant use of funds

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Analysis of priority reform areas relevant for Cohesion Policy	Submission to DG REFORM of an analysis of priority reform areas particularly relevant for Cohesion Policy	Q2 2024
Commission position on fulfilment of horizontal and thematic enabling conditions after programmes adoptions following notification on fulfilment from MS	Decisions adopted within the regulatory deadline according to 15(4) and 15(6) CPR	For all concerned programmes

General objective: An Economy that Works for People

Specific Objective: 3.3: European Semester

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
REGIO contribution to the European Semester	Contribution to the Country Reports	Q2 2024
Roll out of the support to selected regions under Pillars 1 and 2	15 regions receiving expert support	Q2 2024

General objective: An Economy that Works for People

Specific Objective: 3.4: Demographic and social challenges

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Roll out of the support to selected regions under Pillars 1 and 2	15 regions receiving expert support	Q2 2024
Support for quality and impactful investments aimed at integration of marginalised communities	Start of the WB support activities in targeted countries	Q2 2024

General objective: An Economy that Works for People

Specific Objective: 3.5: Urban and territorial development

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Bilateral dialogues with Outermost Regions supporting their development strategies	Number of meetings	9
Facilitated implementation and increased visibility for the 4 EU macro-regional strategies (in the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic and Ionian, the Danube, and the Alpine Region)	Number of major strategy events organised	4 Annual fora and 1 High-level Group meeting during the macro-regional week in Brussels
	Adoption of the 5th biennial Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies	Q4 2024
Implementation of the rolling action plan for a Long-term vision for rural areas	Workshop for stakeholders presenting the final version of the Toolkit for combination of funding for the development of rural areas available online	Q1 2024
Maintain the involvement of IVY trainees (Interreg Volunteer Youth) in Interreg programmes and projects to its 2022 level (year of Youth)	Number of volunteers that have been deployed in programmes and projects	100

Output	Indicator	Target
Methodological toolkit for Functional Areas developed made available to local stakeholders	A toolkit published	Q2 2024
Preparation and launch of the 3rd call for EUI-innovative actions	Launch of the call	Q2 2024
Report on developments in connection with the European Urban Initiative submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council (Art 12 of ERDF Regulation)	Report submitted	Q4 2024
Report to EP and Council on the implementation of the Commission Communication on the outermost regions (COM(2022)198final)	Report to be adopted before the end of the Commission mandate	Q4 2024
Steer the implementation of the new outermost regions' strategy adopted in May 2022: mainstream outermost regions' concerns into all relevant EU policies	Number of Commission initiatives that reflect outermost regions' specificities/ have specific provisions for these regions	8
Support to Urban Agenda for the EU	2 new UAEU Partnerships receiving support for their activity	Q1 2024
Consultation of programmes and stakeholders to feed the reflection on the Post-2027 Interreg programmes	Number of consultations (events and other forms of consultation)	4

General objective: A Stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective: 4.1: Neighbouring and enlargement

Related to spending programmes: ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Appropriate Cohesion Policy input included in the Commission's Annual Enlargement Package in Q4	Contributions provided to NEAR	Q4 2024

General objective: A Stronger Europe in the World

Specific Objective: 4.2: Cohesion Policy's role in external relations

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Regional and urban policy dialogues with strategic partners successfully organised	Number of dialogues including policy conclusions	2
Successful implementation of the new International Urban and Regional Cooperation programme (IURC)	Number of thematic networking events	6

General objective: Communication

Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF, ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC

Main outputs in 2024:

Other important outputs

Output	Indicator	Target
Greater use of INFOREGIO and Kohesio to increase visibility and transparency of Cohesion Policy	Total number of visitors	> 1,000,000
Increasing Media impact to communicate on Cohesion Policy achievements	Number of mentions of the policy portfolio in the Daily Press Review during the year	>5,700
Successful implementation of Integrated umbrella campaign EU in my Region	Percentage of the regional population reached by the regional communication campaigns	> 50%
Organisation of the annual REGIOSTARS contest to highlight Cohesion Policy achievements at local level	Number of applications for the awards	> 200

Part 2 – Modernising the administration

A. Human resource management

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

Main outputs in 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
4th REGIO Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan	Design, consult and adopt a new Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan starting 2024 building on the achievements of the 2023 Work Plan	Q1 2024
Implementation of actions linked to the 2024 Equality Mainstreaming Work plan	Number of equality related events (trainings, workshops and staff activities) organised	5
Implementation of the annual REGIO Training plan	Percentage of in-house trainings included in REGIO Training plan for 2024 organised through EU Learn by REGIO units by the end of the year	70%
Further increase staff engagement	Organise physical team events involving all REGIO staff	At least 1 by Q4 2024

B. 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 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Estimated risk at payment or residual total error rate	Remains <2% of relevant expenditure
	Estimated risk at closure	Remains <2% of relevant expenditure
Efficient controls	Budget execution	Remains 100% of payment appropriations ⁽³¹⁾
	Timely payments	98% of payments (in value) made on time

⁽³¹⁾ From the voted budget

Output	Indicator	Target
Economy of controls	Overall estimated cost of controls	Remains below 0.5% of funds managed
Reliance on the management and control systems	% of all operational programmes, assessed as functioning well or functioning with only some improvements needed	90%

C. 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) ⁽³²⁾ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction ⁽³³⁾ of fraud.

Main outputs in 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
Financial corrections implemented as a follow-up of financial recommendations in OLAF final reports	% of financial corrections implemented for OLAF final case reports closed during the year	75%
Improve anti-fraud knowledge, deliver the message from the JAFS action plan to the Member States authorities and cooperation among Commission departments in particular in the framework of the PFDNET and its subgroups	Number of meetings per year, including those of the FPDNET and its sub-groups	At least 5
Increase the systematic use of ARACHNE or alternative datamining tools available at national level and encourage MS to use exclusion databases such as EDES when selecting beneficiaries of their progs	% of all programmes using Arachne	60%
Support capacity building and dissemination of information to Member States on fraud prevention and detection	Number of presentations and training sessions offered	29

⁽³²⁾ [Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy Action plan - revision 2023 COM\(2023\) 405 of 11 July 2023](#) – 'the Communication on the 2023 revision' – and the accompanying document, [SWD\(2023\) 245](#) – 'the revised Action Plan'.

⁽³³⁾ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

D. 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 2024:

Output	Indicator	Target
Alignment with SUMMA and implementation of necessary features in SFC back-office systems and data migration in the Data Warehouse	Minimal viable solution for all systems to be operational and integrated with SUMMA, allowing for electronic handling of all financial processes that are in place in today's ABAC	Q4 2024
Business reporting system ensures continued provision of common and improved reporting and data services.	1. Provide requested reporting services, Advanced Data Analytics, Machine Learning, and Artificial Intelligence on the existing data and real-time reporting depending on the priorities set by the Business Managers 2. Contribute to the setup of REGIO's Data Governance and the implementation of the Data Strategy	Q4 2024
Compliance is attested for all IT systems in GRC and security plans are updated	Login compliance and annual security plan review	Q4 2024
Enhancing staff skills and competences for effective use of data, information, and knowledge	10 key data stakeholders within REGIO trained upon EC Data platform supported tools portfolio	Q4 2024
Implementation of the corporate principles for data governance for REGIO's key data assets	Share of implementation by the end of 2024	85%
Knowledge and information effectively shared and reused within REGIO, in alignment with related corporate policies	Number of visitors to RegioWiki	>700 (average per month)
Migration from SharePoint on premise to SharePoint online	Finalisation of migration of REGIO's intranet "MyREGIO" to the new DG HUB format	Q4 2024
Raise awareness about data protection	100% of REGIO staff targeted by informative sessions for units and specific guidance for data breaches, data subject's requests, risk assessments and accountability	Q4 2024

Output	Indicator	Target
The financial transactions IT system (SFC2021 Back Office) is efficiently supporting the implementation of 2021-2027 programming period in alignment with IT work plan	Deliver SFC 2021 Back-office: financial transactions and features, relevant to REGIO's contribution and implementation, according to REGIO's IT work plan 2024	Q4 2024
The IT system running workflow processes is efficiently supporting the implementation of 2021-2027 programming period in alignment with BPT work plan	Deliver MyWorkplace processes and features relevant to REGIO's contribution and implementation of the 2021-2027 programming period in line with REGIO's IT work plan 2024 and aligned with BPT work plan.	Q4 2024
The IT systems running processes and financial transactions are efficiently supporting the implementation of the 2014-2020 period, in alignment with BPT work plan	Ensure the continuity of 2014-2020 processes in WAVE and SFC2014-BO and first part of the implementation of 2014-2020 closures in MyWorkplace	Q4 2024

E. Sound environmental management

Objective: REGIO takes account of the environmental impact of its day-to-day actions, taking measures to reduce the impact of the administration work, supported by their respective EMAS Correspondents or EMAS Site Coordinators.

Main outputs in 2024:

I. Reducing emissions from staff and expert' business travel and reducing CO2 and other atmospheric emissions

Output	Indicator	Target (2019 as baseline)
Contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to reaching the Commission's climate neutrality by 2030	CO2 emissions in kg derived from missions	a reduction by 5%

IV. Circular economy (public procurement (GPP), waste, biodiversity and sustainable food

Output	Indicator	Target (2019 as baseline, as appropriate)
Ensuring Green Public Procurement	Contracts in which GPP criteria are included where applicable.	100%
	Units with contracts where GPP criteria are applicable are informed	100%

