



# Management plan 2023

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 and the energy crisis. 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. 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.

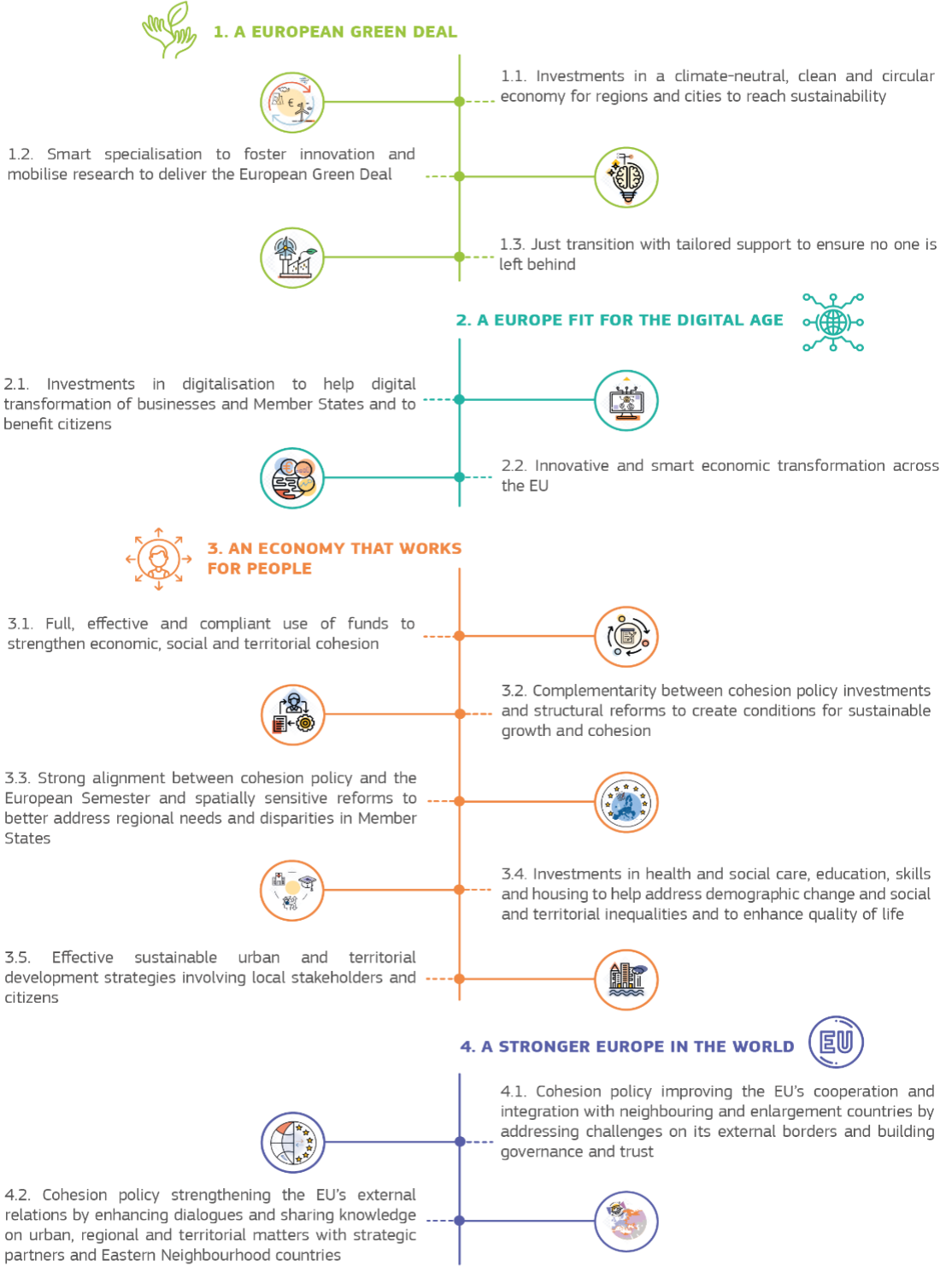
The **main priorities and challenges** in 2023 will be:

- To provide Member States with support for the successful roll-out of implementation of **2021-2027 programmes** and ensure a robust basis for cohesion policy funds' contribution to the crisis recovery over mid-term and economic development of regions through successful green and digital transition over the longer term. Complementarities and synergies with the investments mobilised through the Recovery and Resilience Facility will continue to be ensured throughout the implementation. REGIO will also table a Staff Working Document on the Outcome of the 2021-2027 Programming Exercise for cohesion policy.
- To facilitate Member States' efforts in the implementation of the **Just Transition Fund** (JTF) and the **Public Sector Loan Facility** (PSLF) for the transition process towards a climate-neutral economy in Member States and regions. This is of particular importance given the shorter implementation cycle (concerning resources from Next Generation EU) for JTF and the long due diligence procedure by the EIB for the loan component of the PSLF.
- To work closely with Member States to make full use of the remaining allocation from the **2014-2020** period and to assist them in using the flexibilities offered by Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE), Flexible Assistance to territories (FAST-CARE) and Support Affordable Energy measures (SAFE) to address the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, notably as regards the support of refugees, energy costs and alleviating the burden on national budgets due to the increased costs and accumulated delays encountered in implementation of the funds.

- To continue to promote the uptake of the **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) in Member States and regions with the support of cohesion policy to transform our human habitat by supporting programme authorities and key stakeholders to invest in the spirit of NEB and to integrate support to NEB projects in programmes financed by cohesion funding, to provide direct support to pilot investments under the European Urban Initiative and monetary awards for the best projects and initiatives in the 2023 edition of the NEB Prizes competition.
- To set up a technical assistance platform that, following the Communication on **“Harnessing Talent in Europe’s Regions”**, addresses the situation of regions facing a decline in working age population and lack of talent. It will develop and implement actions aiming at boosting talent and will feed into the European Year of Skills 2023.
- To celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Single Market**, the success of which would not be possible without the contribution of cohesion policy. Both aim at bringing economic convergence among Member States and their mutual reinforcement will be highlighted in 2023.
- 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 increasingly important for the overall support of the EU project.
- To engage reflections for the **future cohesion policy beyond 2027**, through the high-level reflection group set up by the Commissioner. The meetings are scheduled for 2023 and will include hearings of academic experts and institutions.

# PART 1. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for 2023

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:



## 1. General objective: A European Green Deal

Regional policy<sup>1</sup> and its funds will be a key instrument for supporting the delivery on the ground of the European Green Deal and related initiatives in 2023.

To this end, REGIO will support the implementation in Member States of around 300 investment and cooperation programmes in the 2021-2027 period. The implementation of 2014-2020 programmes (including REACT-EU resources) will reach their final stages, delivering strong investments in the areas of the low-carbon economy and environmental and climate-change adaptation. Harnessing the full potential of the strengthened EU budget presented in the framework of the Recovery Plan for Europe, REGIO will further foster the twin green and digital transformation to build a more sustainable and resilient Europe for the next generation.

The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) is a key tool to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind. In 2023, REGIO will support the implementation of the Just Transition Fund through the further development and operation of the Just Transition Platform and will promote the take-up of the Public Sector Loan Facility and its advisory services.



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

The support from cohesion policy will be key to reach the targets of climate-neutrality and circular economy by 2050 and contribute to a just transition, also in line with the objectives of the Recovery Plan for Europe and making use of the JTF.

REGIO will continue to operate matrices to discuss energy, climate change, environment (including the Do No Significant Harm principle), just transition, sustainable and smart mobility, digitalisation, innovation, and industrial policy. REGIO will also facilitate the fulfilment of the **enabling conditions** for cohesion policy objective 2<sup>2</sup>, which relate to the main dimensions of the European Green Deal, such as the new National Energy and Climate Plans or the updated Waste Management Plans.

REGIO is participating in many inter-service groups to implement the various initiatives included in the European Green Deal, such as the revision of the EU energy policy, or the new EU Climate Adaptation Strategy and the zero-pollution action plan. REGIO is also involved in the implementation of the REPowerEU plan which sets out measures to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels and fast forward the green transition, while increasing the resilience of the EU-wide energy system.

<sup>1</sup> Where reference is made to 'Regional Policy' in this document activities of REGIO linked to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) investments are meant. Where 'cohesion policy' is mentioned, reference is made to REGIO and EMPL combined efforts through ERDF, CF and the European Social Fund (ESF).

<sup>2</sup> Cohesion policy for 2021-2027 legislative framework provides for 5 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."

REGIO coordinates, with ENV and ENER respectively, the 'European Network of Environmental Authorities and Managing Authorities' and the 'Energy and Managing Authorities Network'. In 2023, the implementation of the specific initiatives on the ground linked to the European Green Deal will continue through these networks.

In order to improve the effectiveness of environmental, energy and climate investments aimed at transformations to reach long-term sustainability, of cohesion policy, assistance will be provided to managing authorities and potential beneficiaries in the form of a community of practice and a dedicated platform.

Cohesion policy is the main EU funding instrument under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for investments in **sustainable energy**, in particular in energy efficiency and renewable energy. This is the case for the 2014-2020 period and will remain so for 2021-2027. Support to the renovation of buildings is a key priority. In particular, with the adoption of the Commission Communication on the 'Renovation Wave' initiative, and the REPowerEU plan, the role of cohesion policy in supporting **energy efficiency in buildings** will be further reinforced. Investments in renewables will be targeted at the level of research, development, and innovation, such as smart grids, smart energy systems and hydrogen. Technical assistance will be provided to help Member States and regions implement these measures.

Further mainstreaming of the **New European Bauhaus** through cohesion policy will transform our human habitat, at various levels of conceptualisation, institutional expansion, and practical application, together with Member States, to specific 2021-2027 programmes and cohesion funding for NEB projects on the ground.

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. All of these areas are priorities for REGIO. Implementation of programmes in 2023 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. Particular attention will be given to the EU outermost regions as regards 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**. This will continue in 2021-2027, where resources programmed in these areas will be included in the calculation of thematic concentration requirements. The adoption of the disaster risk management plans will be in line with the rescEU framework<sup>3</sup>. The investments from the 2021-2027 programmes need to match the measures included in those plans.

An ex-post evaluation of the 2014 -2020 ERDF and Cohesion Fund investments will also look into areas of greening the economy. In line with the Better Regulation requirements,

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<sup>3</sup> In the framework of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the European Commission created RescEU to protect citizens from disasters and manage emerging risks. Fully financed by the EU, RescEU has established a new European reserve of resources including a fleet of firefighting planes and helicopters, medical evacuation planes, and a stockpile of medical items and field hospitals that can respond to health emergencies, as well as other instruments to quickly respond to natural disaster and soon also chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incidents.



REGIO will also carry out an open public consultation on this evaluation 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**<sup>4</sup>, in particular in Member States and regions where considerable efforts are still needed for developing a modern transport system (including in the outermost regions) and for addressing issues like environmental protection, road safety, climate change mitigation or poor connectivity which impact adversely economic, social, and territorial cohesion.

In particular, REGIO assesses the fulfilment of the enabling condition for the comprehensive transport planning of Member States and regions seeking support. REGIO also puts emphasis on the strategic framework for investments into sustainable urban mobility (e.g., sustainable urban mobility plans; integrated strategies for urban development). In many programmes, there is now a clear link between cohesion policy and the development and implementation of sustainable urban mobility plans.



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

The development and deployment of new technologies are critical to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. This requires innovation to support the greening of the economy and the development of sustainable products and solutions throughout value chains. In 2022, REGIO further monitored a general integration of green technologies in 2021-2027 programmes through funds dedicated to green innovation representing at least 1% of the total ERDF investment in programmes. After the conclusion of the programming exercise, REGIO will focus in 2023 on strengthening interregional cooperation by connecting regions with shared priorities linked to **green innovation** through the new S3 Community of Practice and through Interregional Innovation Investments calls published under the 2023-2024 work programme. Under all policy objectives, REGIO is supporting the delivery of green solutions on the ground.

The work of the Smart Specialisation (S3) Platform<sup>5</sup> and the S3 Community of Practice will continue focusing on **green technology** related areas, in particular through the thematic platform on energy and on industrial modernisation, the latter working on areas such as hydrogen, biomass or sustainable manufacturing.



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

The **JTF** regulation<sup>6</sup> entered into force in 2021 with the rest of the cohesion policy regulations; it has an overall budget of EUR 19.2 bn in current prices. The

<sup>4</sup> In line with its policy objective 3 “a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility”

<sup>5</sup> The S3 Platform assists EU countries and regions to develop, implement and review their Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3).

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 establishing the Just Transition Fund



implementation of the JTF programmes and the Territorial Just Transition Plans will roll out in 2023. The Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (**JASPERS**) has been assisting Member States to develop a project pipeline which can implement JTF priorities without delay. The Commission now also kicks-off the implementation of the **Public Sector Loan Facility (3rd pillar of the JTM)** consisting of a grant component managed by the Commission/CINEA and a loan component managed by the EIB. In 2023, REGIO will promote the take-up of the Facility and its advisory services.

As integral part of the 2021-2027 programmes, the **Territorial Just Transition Plans** outlining the Member States' transition process towards a climate-neutral economy and addressing the social, economic, and environmental challenges will be the cornerstone of the just transition. Specific technical assistance is provided to Member States to help them implement their plans through the Just Transition Platform.

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

The **Just Transition Platform**<sup>7</sup> will continue to operate in 2023 through a multi-annual technical assistance framework. The aim is to provide comprehensive support on just transition to Member States and coal and carbon-intensive regions. This includes a dedicated webpage, four working groups on carbon-intensive regions, specific project and expert databases and a coordinated Commission approach, including the work stream for carbon intensive regions. Additional assistance will include the development of practical tools, the organisation of dedicated workshops and the provision of experts to the regions.

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<sup>7</sup> [Just Transition Platform | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/just-transition/platform/)



## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



To help deliver **A European Green Deal**, REGIO has planned several communication actions for 2023:

As part of the JTM, REGIO will deploy targeted communication actions for stakeholders, media, and the general public to accompany the implementation of specific measures in the territories most negatively affected by the transition towards climate neutrality, as part of the JTM. Special emphasis will be placed on the communication and public engagement around the fair and socially equitable aspects of the transition – **leaving no one behind**.



As the largest EU annual event dedicated to regional policy and a unique platform, bringing together regions and cities from all over Europe and beyond, the **EU Regions Week** will pursue its contribution to the twin – green and digital- transition.

In 2023, the **RegioStars** awards will allow for more cohesion projects from across the EU to compete and focus on projects that are sustainable and have an impact on the development of the territory.

Throughout 2023, REGIO will intensify its communication around cohesion policy contribution to a **clean, secure, and affordable energy** system in the EU (RePowerEU). Particular emphasis will be placed on local communication via social media around existing and future investments for energy efficiency and renewables.

Special attention will be placed on the communication of cohesion policy support for the twin green and digital transitions through flagship events such as the **Cities Forum 2023 – Together for Green and Just Cities** and the 2023 **New European Bauhaus Prizes** for sustainable and green projects implemented throughout Europe.

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

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



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

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation both in the public and private sectors. But it also highlighted the urgency to tackle digital issues across Europe and its regions. The competitiveness of businesses clearly depends on their capacity to take up new digital technologies as well as on the quality of digital services provided by the public sector. REGIO's support facilitates the uptake of new digital technologies in SMEs and helps firms efficiently embrace technological change. Furthermore, investment in education systems, digital infrastructure, e-skills, e-inclusion, e-governance, or intelligent transport solutions are supported.

REGIO will support the enhancement of **administrative capacities** of national and regional authorities to prepare and manage broadband deployment. The ERDF supports investments in broadband in "white" and "grey" areas. 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 expected in 2021-2027 cohesion policy programmes in 14 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 will also continue 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. A new service contract has been put in place to ensure a continued operation of the Support Facility.



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

Investments under policy objective 1<sup>8</sup> will be a crucial tool for Member States to develop their strategies for economic and digital transformation that will allow them to

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<sup>8</sup> Policy objective 1: "a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity"

stay competitive in a fast-changing environment, while also achieving climate-neutrality by 2050.

**Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms**<sup>9</sup> and the newly launched Smart Specialisation Community of Practice will 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 the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the areas of health, circular economy, and tourism.

In order to help regions, position themselves in European and globally competitive value chains, the Commission launched the **Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) instrument**<sup>10</sup>. It builds on the experience of pilot actions on interregional innovation, which helped regions build joint co-investment projects in shared or complementary priority areas and to accelerate commercialisation and scale up of innovation. The I3 instrument aligns with EU policy priorities and enhances complementarities with actions under other EU programmes. The first eleven I3 projects selected in 2022 will start in late 2022/early 2023, mostly in the areas of green and digital transition and smart manufacturing. In 2023, new calls will be launched under the 2023-2024 work programme, including calls linked to the implementation of the New European Agenda for Research and Innovation adopted in July 2022. In the last quarter of 2023 the support facility for I3 will also be launched to assist and support innovation actors in less developed regions in building stronger administrative structures and processes.

REGIO has launched an ex-post **evaluation** study of investment projects targeting the provision of information and communication technologies (ICT) co-financed by the ERDF during 2007-2020. Another ex-post evaluation study will look into SME support over the 2014-2020 period. Both evaluations will form part of the major 2014-2020 ex-post evaluation strategy launched by REGIO in 2021 to be completed by end 2025.

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<sup>9</sup> Industrial Modernisation, Energy and Agro Food

<sup>10</sup> [EISMEA : I3 instrument](#)



## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



To help deliver **A Europe Fit for the Digital Age**, the following **communication actions** are planned for 2023:

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.

The **INFOREGIO** website will continue to display multi-lingual information on regional and urban development.

The promotion of cohesion policy will be carried out through a partnership with media/academia. The communication campaign **Smart Regions** will be pursued in collaboration with Euronews to produce and broadcast videos featuring successful innovative cohesion policy projects. REGIO will also pursue its targeted information and engagement activities on its priorities, focusing on relevant segments of the population on **social media**, through its different language and thematic accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube), including sporadic paid content placement.

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

As defined in the Strategic Plan 2020-2024, 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 CF and the JTF. The funds will continue to play a key role in supporting Member States and regions to achieve inclusive growth while promoting investments, especially relevant in the aftermath of COVID-19 and the current Russian military aggression and the energy crisis context. REGIO also stands ready to support Member States by providing technical support and measures aimed at administrative capacity building.



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

Implementation and delivery of funds and programmes are at the core of REGIO's business and a key to economic recovery in times of COVID-19, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the energy crisis. Ensuring quality investments and compliant delivery is essential. In the aftermath of the pandemic, cohesion policy has proved crucial to ensuring a balanced recovery, fostering convergence, and making sure no one is left behind. Similarly, cohesion policy has seen several legislative amendments aiming at providing the flexibility and financial mechanisms to address the consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent impacts on the economies of the Member States. In particular, the **CARE and FAST-CARE** initiatives provide for a 100% co-financing rate for the accounting year ending on 30 June 2023 and increase prefinancing levels, introduce simplified cost options and allow a more flexible use of the funds.

To further address the increased energy costs that vulnerable households and SMEs face, the Commission also put forward a non-paper on **SAFE**, the framework of the REPowerEU co-legislative process, which will result in further flexibilities for the use of the 2014-2020 cohesion policy funds.

Even with these new flexibilities, REGIO will ensure that the bulk of cohesion policy funds will stay firmly concentrated 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 coherence with the Recovery and Resilience Plans.

2023 will be the final year for Member States to deliver the remaining investments planned for the **2014-2020 period**. Amendments to the cohesion policy framework (REACT-EU, CARE, FAST-CARE) have allowed Member States to use remaining resources for the key challenges of 2023. REGIO will closely monitor the implementation of the funds, provide Member States with the necessary support to make full use of the remaining allocations and will work closely notably with those Member States and programmes, which show delays in implementation.

Early 2023, a Communication on “**Harnessing Talent in Europe’s Regions**” was adopted in line with the Commission Work Programme of last year. It addresses the situation of regions facing rapid decline of their working age population and failing to sufficiently develop, retain and attract talent. It proposes accordingly a set of targeted policy responses and feeds into the European Year of Skills 2023. To support regions to develop, retain and attract, the Commission will set up a technical assistance platform. It will notably promote exchange of experiences and dissemination of good practices among concerned regions and territories but also provide direct technical assistance to territories to implement tailored and comprehensive actions aiming at boosting talent.

Regular reporting on the progress of implementation of 2014-2020 programmes to the Board of Directors will continue in 2023. In this respect, based on the list of COVID-19 specific indicators, REGIO will continue to report on the main actions taken to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to regularly update the **Coronavirus dashboard** accordingly. The 2022 annual implementation reports due in May 2023 will report on the progress on the ground as regards the COVID-19 indicators.

For the 2014-2020 period, REGIO will also continue to report on and coordinate the work of the four European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) DGs and their contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth through its Summary of Annual Implementation Reports and its Synthesis of the findings of programme evaluations to be transmitted to the European Parliament and the Council.

2023 will also be the first full year of implementing the **2021-2027** cohesion policy programmes. The Commission will provide Member States with support to kick-start implementation of these programmes. The programmes will play an important role in the long-term recovery and development of the European economy and in addressing its territorial and social impacts. By mid-2023 REGIO, with EMPL, will issue a **Staff Working Document on the outcome of the 2021-2027 programming negotiations** and the REGIO Board of Directors will continue to be regularly updated on the progress in implementation.

The **Cohesion Open Data Platform** now shows the detailed investment plans and indicator targets also from the adopted 2021-2027 programmes. Further data on 2021-2027 EU payments as well as on climate, biodiversity and gender tracking will be made available progressively during 2023.

In order to give a fresh impetus to the partnership principle, the **European Community of Practice on Partnership** will continue to share good practices in how to make partnerships work in cohesion policy programmes and will reflect on a potential revision of the European code of conduct on partnership.

Effective and efficient implementation of cohesion policy requires that the authorities managing the funds, beneficiaries and partners have sufficient **administrative capacity**. To achieve this, ten Member States were recommended to develop roadmaps for administrative capacity building. In 2023, it is expected that these Member States will



implement the actions included in the roadmaps. Member States will also continue to benefit from support. This includes the **TAIEX-REGIO Peer2Peer** exchange instrument, the Peer2Peer Communities of Practitioners for networking, the competency framework and the administrative capacity building self-assessment instrument that helps managing authorities to measure their strengths and weaknesses. Further support includes training sessions on public procurement, state aid, prevention of fraud and corruption and Integrity Pacts, results from pilot actions to support citizens' engagement in cohesion policy and an online 'EU Funds Anti-fraud Knowledge and Resource Centre'. A REGIO study to be published in January 2023 on the selection of operations will help managing authorities to streamline their selection processes under the new programmes.

REGIO will continue to extensively 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 Transnational Network of ERDF/CF SCO Practitioners and bilateral contacts with Member State authorities. Exchange of knowledge among Member States on SCOs and FNLC will also be further promoted. For the 2021-2027 period, the Commission is examining the possibility of adopting SCOs and FNLC at EU level to alleviate administrative burden and ensure legal certainty for Member States and will provide guidance to Member States regarding the audit of SCOs and FNLC. A REGIO Study on the uptake of SCOs in 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 across the EU will be launched in 2023. It will collect specific data on the use of SCOs in all Member States and will focus on the reasons for using or not using SCOs and propose recommendations in order to allow for wider uptake.

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, in particular those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic 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, not only for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund, but also for the JTF. The purpose is to address challenges and support the development of a pipeline of mature and high-quality projects. JASPERS assistance will focus on the policy priorities and objectives for the new programming period. To this end, country work programmes agreed between the Commission, JASPERS and the Member States are established.

The **European Solidarity Fund** (EUSF) will continue to provide post-disaster relief to Member States for the damages caused by natural disasters including by droughts and floods of the summer 2022. In 2023 DE, BE, NL, AT, and LU (floods of July 2021) as well as ES and EL (regional disasters of 2021) that have been awarded EUSF support will continue implementing their planned measures.

The **Brexit Adjustment Reserve**, worth EUR 5.5 bn, is a funding mechanism providing support to businesses and employment in the regions and sectors most affected by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, thus reducing its impact on economic, social, and territorial cohesion. It also assists public administrations in the proper functioning of border, customs, sanitary and phytosanitary controls and in ensuring essential services to the citizens and companies affected. The third instalment of pre-financing will be paid by April 2023. Once the RePowerEU regulation is in force, Member States have the possibility by 1 March to request transfers from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

The **Closure Guidelines** for 2014-2020 regulate different aspects of the closure of programmes. Following the FAST-CARE amendment, a revised version of the Closure guidelines was prepared and adopted. In 2023, further efforts such as trainings and IT procedures are needed to prepare the Commission services and Member States for the closure of 2014-2020 period, even though the closure documents will only be sent to the Commission by 2025.

Ensuring **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 (including the ones not detected) 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. In addition, 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 where it identifies risks in this regard.

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 run over the next years and be completed by the end of 2025. It will be a valuable input to the design of the post-2027 policy framework. Through its 13 work packages, the ex-post exercise will look into most of the cohesion policy support areas. It will also provide evidence for policy learning in order to improve cohesion policy implementation.



### **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 4 horizontal and 16 thematic **enabling conditions** further streamlines and develops the legal framework of the previous period. In 2023 REGIO will continue to monitor the fulfilment of enabling conditions after the programme adoptions in line with 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 2023 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. The aim is 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**

REGIO will continue its participation in 2023 to the coordination of socio-economic policies across the EU. The 2023 **European Semester**, in particular the country reports and recommendations to the Council for Country-specific Recommendations will continue to be central for the implementation of the recovery and resilience plans along with the investments made by cohesion funds. In 2023, the focus will remain on securing a successful roll-out and implementation of the RRF and the implementation of measures to tackle immediate energy-related priorities under REPowerEU.

REGIO will contribute to the country reports, focusing on the synergies and complementarities between the national recovery and resilience plans and cohesion policy and on regional disparities and specificities within countries. In addition, REGIO will complement the economic analysis with regional data, when the information is available, taking into account the regional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

In this context, REGIO will prepare a **Staff Working Document** bringing together the contributions to feed the country reports and the chapeau communication. The objective is to provide a coherent narrative at EU and national level about the **role of disparities and cohesion policy within the European Semester** as background to the more limited elements presented in the country reports and their annexes.

REGIO will continue assisting SG RECOVER and ECFIN in the monitoring of the RRF to ensure coordination and safeguarding of the **complementarity between cohesion policy and the RRF**, in view of the substantial support the facility provides to reforms and investments. To this end, REGIO contributes to the assessment of milestones and targets, which are essential to the release of RRF payments.

REGIO also contributes to the Annual Sustainable Growth Survey and the European Semester autumn/spring package, in particular the chapeau communications.

Cohesion policy, with its objective of reducing social, economic, and territorial disparities within the Union, is strongly aligned to the UN **sustainable development goals** (SDG). 94% of cohesion policy (2014-2020) directly supports 11 of the 17 SDGs in the EU<sup>11</sup>.



**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 for the 2021-2027 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 will invest in these areas, thus supporting 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 and contributing to the objectives of the **2023 European Year of Skills**.

Given the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities in Europe, as well as the consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, raising important **migration challenges** across the EU, it is expected that social services, housing, inclusion of marginalised communities, needs of children and education (digitalisation, equipment, infrastructure), will receive greater attention in the 2021-2027 programmes. REGIO in cooperation with the World Bank will design a specific support mechanism fostering impactful investments aimed at integration of marginalised communities.

As outlined in the **EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025**<sup>12</sup>, REGIO subscribed to the effective integration of the gender dimension in the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund supported actions. Gender equality has been one of the horizontal principles for cohesion policy. This support will continue in the 2021-2027 period with tracking of the gender dimension in programmes. Sharing best practices in programmes, as well as the use of the newly developed Regional Gender Equality Monitor will contribute to the effective

<sup>11</sup> Interactive data story here: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/qy7g-4z9g/>

<sup>12</sup> [EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 2020 COM\(2020\) 152 final](#) adopted on 5 March 2021

implementation of the principle in 2021-2027. REGIO's Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan will also include actions promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

**Demographic change** impacts many policy areas, requiring close cooperation across policy portfolios. 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 2020 Report on the impact of demographic change and 2021 Green Paper on ageing. 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. In particular, the reduction of the working age population will require to balance the consequences through higher productivity and increased employment rates. In this regard, the development of talent is needed. A Communication on "Harnessing Talent in Europe's Regions" was published in January 2023, identifying the concerned regions and how to address these demographic challenges with policy responses, in the form of exchange of experience and targeted technical support. This Communication is the first to be adopted in the context of the European Year of Skills, contributing to the promotion of concrete actions to boost the competitiveness of European companies and to realise the full potential of the digital and green transformation.

Finally, REGIO will produce a paper updating the analysis of the **geography of EU discontent**. It would allow for a better inter-institutional and public awareness of this issue.



### **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<sup>13</sup> that is not thematic but addresses the challenges faced at local level in a cross-sectoral manner. 8% of ERDF resources are subject to an obligatory **urban earmarking** in all Member States. REGIO will focus on supporting the implementation of territorial tools in the 2021-2027 period. In 2023, REGIO will continue to work with the World Bank on fostering the functional area approach and with JRC regarding the evidence for place-based policy and investment responses by local authorities. Local actors need to be fully involved throughout the whole policy cycle, including in the planning, decision-making process, and implementation of integrated territorial strategies.

REGIO will continue to promote the uptake of the **New European Bauhaus** in cohesion policy pursuing local transformation while ensuring partnership and engagement of stakeholders. Cities and regions are key for delivering on the green and digital transitions. REGIO will support programme authorities and key stakeholders to enable investments in the spirit of NEB and support to NEB projects from programmes. REGIO, in collaboration with the European Investment Bank prepared the 'New European Bauhaus territorial development model', which is a voluntary financial instrument that can mobilise additional funding for NEB-like investments in specific regions and Member States. Finally, REGIO also

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<sup>13</sup> Policy objective 5: 'a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives'

provides a direct support to specific NEB initiatives: 1) expert support for municipalities developing pilot New European Bauhaus investments (through a dedicated Technical Assistance line); 2) funding contributing to the specific NEB projects under the European Urban Initiative; and 3) monetary awards for the best NEB-like projects and initiatives in the 2023 edition of the NEB Prizes competition.

As concerns the renewed Urban Agenda for the EU, REGIO will organise the Cities Forum in March 2023. The **European Urban Initiative** (EUI) will evaluate the first call of urban innovative actions dedicated to New European Bauhaus and will launch another call with new topics of urban innovation. The EUI will also provide integral support for the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU and start support for the first two partnerships on Greening of cities and Sustainable tourism. Moreover, urban innovations accomplished under 2014-20 Urban Innovative actions will continue to be capitalised and shared with urban authorities.

REGIO will continue in 2023 with the implementation of the four **macro-regional strategies** (MRS), i.e., the EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region, for the Danube Region, for the Adriatic and Ionian Region and for the Alpine Region. These strategies address common challenges faced by geographical areas across borders. They cover a wide range of different EU policies and aim to coordinate efforts at all governance levels to promote a more balanced development of macro regions. In 2023, REGIO will follow up the planned Council Conclusions on the fourth Commission report on the Implementation of EU MRS, adopted at the end of 2022. The strategy and action plan for the Adriatic and Ionian Region will be updated in 2023.

REGIO will implement several actions in favour of **border regions** on the basis of the 2021 Commission report “EU Border Regions: Living labs of European integration”, which are reinforcing the impact of Cross Border Cooperation. These actions will focus on: closer 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 (e.g. through a conference); the contribution of border regions to the European Green Deal (e.g. through pilot projects in cross-border energy communities); and the involvement of more young people in cross border activities in line with the 2022 European Year of Youth (e.g. through the **Interreg Volunteer Youth** initiative).

REGIO will continue integrating the **outermost regions**’ specificities across EU policies in relevant impact assessments, proposals for legislation and policy initiatives. Following the adoption of the Communication “Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU outermost regions”<sup>14</sup>, REGIO is working closely with all services to foster its implementation. The focus is on bridging the quality-of-life gap between these regions and the rest of the EU and on supporting sustainable and inclusive recovery and growth underpinned by the green and digital transition. REGIO will co-operate with other DGs to deliver the new opportunities for the outermost regions e.g.,

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<sup>14</sup> COM(2022)198 of May 2022



under the programmes LIFE, Horizon, and the Fisheries, Maritime, and Aquaculture Fund EMFAF.

In addition to the REGIO-led outermost regions working group, REGIO will develop a new **formal process of dialogue with each outermost region** at Commissioner-President level and at technical level, to support the implementation of their development strategies and to monitor progress. REGIO will also co-operate with the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions, which are due to adopt opinions on the Communication in the first semester of 2023.

Furthermore, REGIO will conclude on-going projects, including a European Parliament pilot project to support cultural activities in the EU outermost regions and Overseas Countries and territories, a project to foster exchange of good practices in climate-change related action between the regions and their neighbours and a project with the OECD on the potential for value chains 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**<sup>15</sup>. In 2023, this means steering the delivery of the 24 thematic actions of the Commission Rural Action Plan which fall under DGs other than REGIO and AGRI; delivering the EU tool kit on access to, and combination of EU funds supporting rural development as well as the EU Rural Observatory; encouraging rural proofing of relevant Commission initiatives of the CWP 2023; mobilising Member States on the Rural Pact, including at Council level; and launching preparations for the 2024 public report based on the implementation of the Commission Rural Action Plan.

Finally, within the context of its 2014-2020 ex-post **evaluation** strategy, REGIO launched a study on integrated territorial delivery mechanisms during the 2014-2020 period which it will continue to oversee in 2023.

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<sup>15</sup> COM(2021)345 of June 2021.





## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS



#TerritorialCohesion



To help deliver **An Economy that Works for People**, the following communication actions are planned for 2023:

REGIO will continue deploying the communication campaign **Europe in my region** that creates together with partner regions and EU-funded projects **tools and opportunities** to engage with citizens and show what is done near them thanks to EU support. Up to 15 regional activations around popular places that are part of regional identity will be deployed in Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Romania. The initiative places special attention on **EU in my school**, which will make EU action for the regions tangible and playful for pupils aged 3-18.

Communication actions especially through social media will promote the contribution of cohesion funds to tackle consequences of **the energy crisis and the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine** (CARE, FAST-CARE, SAFE).



As a follow up to the **Conference on the future of Europe** REGIO continues its dialogue with citizens and more specifically with young people. The programme for aspiring journalists **Youth4Regions** will further support media pluralism, by helping students in journalism and young media to discover what the EU is doing in their region. The **Media Trips** programme will select local multipliers who will visit and report on EU-funded projects in their regions. Both initiatives feed into the **European Year of Skills**.

The **EU Regions Week** will celebrate its 21<sup>st</sup> edition in October 2023 and will highlight the contribution of cohesion policy to skills, re-training workers and providing professional opportunities for youth, such as **Interreg Volunteers Youth**.

## 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.



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

The EU's cooperation with its **neighbouring countries**, including with the countries surrounding the EU outermost regions as well as the integration and territorial cooperation work with **enlargement countries**, represent unique chances for third countries to work with their neighbouring EU Member States on common challenges and opportunities. In 2023, the focus will be on ensuring a successful start of the implementation of the 2021-2027 Interreg programmes with external partners (Interreg IPA and Interreg NEXT), including the conclusion of the financing agreements with third countries.

REGIO supports the EU **enlargement** process by strengthening administrative capacity building of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) countries and offering an opportunity to work in shared management. This is done in close coordination with the EEAS and other Commission services. In addition, the EU MRS (EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region - EUSAIR and EU Strategy for the Danube Region - EUSDR) offer opportunities to deepen their participation in key EU initiatives like the EU Green Deal. In 2023, EU enlargement activities will be gaining momentum with the EU having opened accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia in 2022, and with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova having been given the status of candidate countries.

For 2014-2020 **ENI CBC** Programmes, the Russian invasion of Ukraine triggered in March 2022 the suspension of cooperation with Russia and Belarus, including in the framework of the Interreg Baltic Sea region programme. Overall, 13 ENI CBC programmes were disrupted, as well as two Interreg transnational programmes, operating on the EU external borders. The 'Regulation on specific rules for 2014-2020 cooperation programmes in a situation of implementation disruption caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine' was adopted in November 2022. It will assist Member States, Ukraine, and Moldova in using EUR 821 million allocated to these programmes through creating a flexible legal environment and simplified requirements for the remainder of the implementation of the 2014-2020 period.

Despite the challenging environment, more than 1,000 existing partnerships between regional and local authorities of the EU and Ukraine border regions have prevailed. Cooperation with Ukraine and Moldova will be stepped up in 2023 and the suspended funds for Russia and Belarus will be re-directed towards the two countries to reinforce the **Interreg NEXT programmes** between them and their EU neighbours. The two Interreg

NEXT programmes implemented in the Southern Neighbourhood will also favour cooperation with immediate EU neighbours across the Mediterranean.

Finally, an **evaluation** into Interreg activities is being implemented within the context of the 2014-2020 ex-post evaluation strategy.



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

Regional and urban policy dialogues will continue in 2023 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, REGIO contributes to attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals, implementing the UN New Urban Agenda at the subnational level by thematically pairing EU and non-EU cities and regions and promoting cooperation and knowledge exchange on specific EU priorities. The European Parliament pilot project International City Partnerships-Acting for Green and Inclusive Recovery and the Arctic urban/regional cooperation project (funded by FPI) will complement the IURC programme and will further contribute to the New Urban Agenda.

In the framework of **New Urban Agenda**, REGIO will deliver voluntary commitments of the EU and its Member States (Renewed Urban Agenda for the EU, Degree of Urbanisation, International Urban and Regional Cooperation Programme, EU's support to external cooperation and partnership, European mission on climate-neutral and smart cities, the NEB). It will represent the EU and its Member States at the UN Habitat Assembly of June 2023 in Nairobi. REGIO will also prepare the G7 ministerial meeting to take place under the Japanese Presidency of the G7 in 2023.

Finally, REGIO will steer the implementation of the two **Union for the Mediterranean** (UfM) strategic action plans 2040 on sustainable urban development and affordable housing while organising and co-chairing the third UfM Ministerial meeting on urban development in Zagreb in May 2023.



## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION ACTIONS

**EU solidarity  
with Ukraine**

**We CARE**

**Cohesion's Action for  
Refugees in Europe**

Funding to support people fleeing  
Russian aggression



To help deliver a **Stronger Europe in the World**, the following communication actions are planned for 2023:

REGIO will continue its ongoing efforts to communicate – via traditional and social media – on the newly implemented **flexibilities** in the use of the cohesion funding to support refugees and EU governments and regions directly impacted by the war.

The **EU Week of Macro regional Strategies** will take place in April 2023 in Brussels, and it will be accompanied by a media program to increase the visibility of the efforts to address common challenges in these areas.

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

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

The **IURC annual event** will give participating cities and regions the opportunity to showcase and exchange on their experiences and cooperation.

## PART 2. Modernising the administration: main outputs for 2023

REGIO will continue in 2023 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**<sup>16</sup> 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 the service's internal control system will be assessed on an ongoing basis throughout the year and be subject to a specific annual assessment covering all internal control principles.

### 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.

In 2023, 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 and REGIO priorities. The issues such as increased workload and need for internal redeployment, optimal use of job quota and dependency on contract agents and service providers will also be closely followed.

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

The Commission adopted targets for first **female appointments** to middle management during 2020-2022. In 2023, it should adopt a new target until the end of the Commission's mandate, which REGIO will attempt to reach, starting in 2023. REGIO will in particular aim at consolidating the middle management gender parity it reached at the end of 2022. Coaching programmes will continue to be offered for female team leaders and deputies to help them advance in their career, namely the Female Talent Development Programme and the 'Developing and supporting senior management talent' Programme.

Again in 2023, 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

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<sup>16</sup> [Communication C\(2017\)2373 - Revision of the Internal Control Framework](#)

inclusiveness in the workplace. Integration of newcomers is facilitated by eLearning and continued targeted communication.

In 2023, all 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 newly developed **L&D Toolkit** (Learning Paths, Fiche Metier, and Competency Maps). In this context it will be important to maintain some physical meetings and trainings in order to contribute to rebuilding a sense of unity between REGIO colleagues.

These efforts will be supported through internal communication activities along three strands: (1) Nurture the sense of REGIO's purpose among staff by reviewing the DG's narrative around the green, digital and fair transition; sharing regularly the videos from the 'Stories from the Regions' internal/external communication initiative in which REGIO colleagues and regional partners take great pride; (2) Foster staff engagement by continuing to deliver on the actions defined in the bottom-up REGIO local HR strategy, including REGIO's Equality work plan; and (3) Promote REGIO staff well-being and team spirit in a flexible working environment.

Refer to the annexes for selected indicators for this section.

## B. Sound financial management



Through the **single audit approach** applied for shared management, the Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion (DAC) of REGIO and EMPL will seek to rely on audit work and opinions reported by audit authorities for each programme, following assessment and reviews. These will be complemented by risk-based audits. The assessment of all available audit results will lead to an independent annual audit opinion of the Directorate General for each cohesion policy programme with a view to obtain the discharge by the European Parliament. This will form the basis for management opinions by the Authorising Officers by Sub-Delegation (AOSD). Furthermore, extended deskwork and risk-based on the spot audits, combined with close cooperation and exchanges on audit methodology, audit tools and legal interpretation will continue improving the capacity of the national and regional audit authorities. 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 assure to bring programme residual error rates systematically down to 2% or less at programme closure. As for 2021-2027, the DAC will carry out a number of preventive system audits to verify that new systems and authorities work effectively. 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 rate on reimbursement of interim payments until the accounts are accepted. REGIO will also undertake actions to improve the effectiveness of management and control

systems through support to managing and audit authorities to improve their administrative capacities through guidance, targeted support, continuous training, professional development and transnational networks to simplify and avoid excess of 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.

As for the Urban Innovative action instrument, falling under **indirect management**, a pillar assessment was carried out in 2022 with positive assessment and a close monitoring of the programme authorities based on the implementation reports and accounts will be maintained in 2023.

Refer to the annexes for selected indicators for this section.

### 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)<sup>17</sup> 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.

The following actions will be put in place or continued in 2023 to enhance the **fraud risk management** of REGIO:

- Support Member States in further administrative capacity building in the field of fraud prevention and detection, and avoidance of conflict of interests (JAFS, action 1 and CAFS, action 38).
- Continue to systematically implement financial corrections and recover unduly paid amounts as a follow-up to financial recommendations in final reports from the European Anti-Fraud Office.
- Increase 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 (including by promoting its data mining / data-enrichment system ARACHNE). The ARACHNE charter will be updated in 2023 to allow the collection of data on beneficial owners (JAFS, action 2 and CAFS, action 4) and take account of the enlarged use of the data mining tool by various DGs beyond cohesion policy;

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<sup>17</sup> 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



- Encourage the adoption of anti-fraud strategies and intensify cooperation between national authorities across borders, with stakeholders and civil society (JAFS, action 3 and CAFS, action 37).
- Improve the anti-fraud knowledge, deliver the messages from the JAFS action plan to the Member States authorities and increase cooperation among 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 37).
- Follow-up on recommendations in OLAF final case reports.

Moreover, as soon as the new action plan of the CAFS is adopted in 2023, the JAFS will be aligned and updated accordingly. Refer to the annexes for selected indicators for this section.

## D. Digital transformation and information management

### Digital transformation



2023 is a year of **consolidation for the IT solutions** processing the 2021-2027 period. In addition to the developments and support for its two flagship information systems (SFC 2021 and MyWorkplace), REGIO will ensure business continuity on current systems as well as providing all needed IT services (e.g., business reports, IT guidance, support for the IT infrastructure, etc.). Furthermore, the transition of the corporate accounting system from ABAC to SUMMA will have a major impact on the work and resources.

REGIO will keep coordinating several services in charge of the co-development of shared IT systems 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** including three modules:
  - **Back-office**, supporting the financial management of Funds related to the period 2021-2027 for shared management services<sup>18</sup> (Primary owner: REGIO);
  - **Front-office**, covering all official exchanges between managing authorities and the shared management services (Primary owner: EMPL);

<sup>18</sup> The “Shared Management” family encompasses the following DGs: REGIO, AGRI, EMPL, MARE and HOME

- **Data Warehouse and Reporting Services**, providing business reporting to all stakeholders including the open data portals of the Commission (Primary owner: REGIO).

The performance tables in the Annex list the main IT objectives and targets for 2023 aiming at being operational in time for the corresponding operations and transactions of the 2021-2027 programming period. REGIO is prioritising the workflow implementation and the related training in order to ensure the execution of the 2021-2027 business processes.

The **Business reporting system** (Launchpad) is continuously adapted to ensure the provisioning of common and improved reporting services to the shared management DGs and the Cohesion Open Data Platform in alignment with the EC data strategy<sup>19</sup> and EC data governance<sup>20</sup>. The usage of advanced data analytics, real-time reporting, self-service, visualisation and dashboarding is explored in line with the *Strategic Objective 3 – Empower business-driven digital transformation* of the new Commission Digital Strategy as well as DIGIT’s future **BI@EC** and **AI@EC** strategies. In the context of the SFC programme, a common business reporting strategy for the shared management DGs is undertaken to provide users a better access and usage of data. REGIO will also present its first **data strategy**.

Furthermore, to guarantee that the IT systems running processes and financial transactions are efficiently supporting the implementation of the 2014-2020 period, REGIO will continue the ongoing technical migration of WAVE and deliver a roadmap for its future migration towards MyWorkplace. Finally, REGIO will continue to support EMPL in developing tools contributing to the digitalisation of audits onboarding the MAPAR solution (management of external audit procedures) in Compass Corporate and promoting the ARACHNE solution (risk-scoring on beneficiaries and promoters, including their beneficial owners) to become the corporate risk-scoring solution of the Commission, in line with the future update of the Financial Regulation.

A major challenge and priority in 2023 is the integration of the SFC back-office systems with **SUMMA** and the migration of all financial processes and data from ABAC to SUMMA. REGIO will define and map business requirements and where needed redesign financial processes, together with its counterparts in the other shared management DGs. SUMMA enters into production in January 2024 and the business continuity of the shared management DGs remains a very high priority.

An additional challenge in 2023 is the migration of all REGIO’s SharePoint custom developed features to SharePoint online, in the context of the EC collaboration strategy and single integrated framework for collaboration.

In line with the *Strategic Objective 4 - Ensure a seamless digital landscape* of the New Commission Digital Strategy, REGIO will continue to focus on ensuring the continuity of base

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<sup>19</sup> EC data strategy (DataStrategy@EC) – Ares(2018) 2075673

<sup>20</sup> Data governance and data policies at the European Commission – Ares(2019)7468514

line IT services provided to users as well as the maintenance and further de-commissioning of **legacy systems**<sup>21</sup> supporting earlier programming periods.

All these activities are detailed in the REGIO IT work plan 2023 endorsed by the Board of Directors.

In the framework of the **corporate IT governance**, REGIO continues as member of the Information Technology and Cybersecurity Board and the Extended IT Investments team, representing the AGRI, EMPL, MARE and REFORM.

### **Information and IT security rules**

As regards the **IT security plans of** REGIO's IT systems, the annual reviews and updates are scheduled using the ITSRM<sup>22</sup> and the GRC<sup>23</sup> tool, in line with *Strategic Objective 5 - Sustain a green, secure, and resilient infrastructure* of the new Commission Digital Strategy. Also, from the beginning of 2023, REGIO will join the corporate c-LISO service of DIGIT, which will ensure IT security services for both REGIO and REFORM and further widen the cybersecurity maturity of the DGs.

Units will continue to be regularly reminded of the importance of correct filing as well as the appropriate use of the **sensitive personal data** flag and the sensitive markings in Ares. Regarding REGIO's filing plan, attention will continue to be paid to limit access when it is necessary, e.g., for contract or audit files. 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 the Commissioner's cabinet and a growing number of more than 5,000 users throughout the Commission. In 2023, activities will continue to enrich RegioWiki with new features in order to fully embrace the 2021-2027 legal and policy framework.

REGIO will continue to regularly provide units with reminders and updates of correct **records management**. The archiving of paper and electronic files is implemented continuously.

REGIO updated the inventory of preservation needs of information systems (IS) in GovIS2, as required by the **Digital Preservation Strategy's** action plan. The inventory will be

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<sup>21</sup> AGMS and SFC2007-BO

<sup>22</sup> IT Security Risk Management Methodology

<sup>23</sup> Governance Risk and Compliance

taken into account when the management of a REGIO IS enters the decommissioning phase, such as for example WFS. Guidelines, trainings, monitoring, and a helpdesk will continue to be made available regarding the correct use of ISs that are integrated to HAN via the Hermes Repository Services, such as MyWorkplace or SFC2021. Finally, REGIO ensures constant monitoring of correct validation and registration of outgoing documents in Ares.

### **Contribution to the action plan of the DataStrategy@EC**

REGIO contributed to the action plan of the DataStrategy@EC, by progressively putting in place the DG's data governance board, elaborating the DG's local data strategy and rethinking its data assets inventory to better align it to the future governance structure of the DG. In 2023, it will continue focusing on the following priorities:

- To foster transparency and accessibility of internal data sources;
- To exploit geo-spatial information;
- To implement the data governance framework;
- To follow the guiding principles of data management, data interoperability, data quality, as well as data protection and information security.

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

### **Data protection**

In 2023, REGIO will continue the implementation of the **Commission Data Protection Action Plan**<sup>24</sup> ensuring compliance with 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 Management System and will continue to provide support and guidance to all staff, including DAC, on data protection related issues in 2023. 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 2023, REGIO will organise specific trainings, publish articles on the intranet and provide updated information in the RegioWiki. Staff will be encouraged to follow specialised trainings on agreements with external processor, data breaches, handling of data subject's requests and international transfers.

Refer to the annexes for selected indicators for this section.

## **E. Sound environmental management**

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<sup>24</sup> Commission's Data Protection Action Plan C(2018) 7432 final

REGIO moved from its Beaulieu premises to the CSM1 and B-28 buildings in 2021. This change was coupled with the need to adapt to the new ways of working such as hot desking that impacted and changed the internal dynamics of the DG as a whole.

Physical presence in the Member States and close contacts with the stakeholders, also in 2023, are of utmost importance, in order to remain connected to reality on the ground. Nonetheless, with a view to supporting the greening of the Commission to reach climate neutrality by 2030, REGIO pledges to further reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from travel. In 2023, REGIO will make extensive use of **videoconferencing**, where relevant and possible. Taking advantage of the move to the new premises, most of the meeting rooms in REGIO have been equipped with videoconferencing tools and guidance has been developed. Moreover, information will be provided to increase staff awareness about building energy consumption, commuting, digital pollution, and waste reduction.

REGIO will continue encouraging EMAS to develop a compensation scheme to offset the generated **carbon emissions** at corporate level. Events will also continue to be more **digitalised**. This way, it will be possible to further save CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and ensure wider participation, profiting from a live transmission and the possibility to interact with wider audiences, often physically distant.

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.

Refer to the annexes for selected indicators for this section.

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

### **IT Workflow ecosystem**

**MyWorkPlace** is the IT workflow ecosystem allowing REGIO (and MARE) to automate its 2021-2027 programming period processes. It was rolled-out in 2021, in time for the start of the submission process.

As opposed to its predecessor WAVE, which was fully developed in-house, MyWorkplace represents the specific implementation of the Compass Corporate programme. It is the concrete result of a multi-DG innovative approach, in full alignment with the Reusable Solutions dimension of the Corporate Digital Strategy. The interaction between all its components is standardised, while integration with other relevant corporate systems is also ensured. This allows seamless access through MyWorkplace to features offered in any of the interfaced systems (e.g., users working with inter-service consultation or with decisions as a part of Decide displayed inside MyWorkplace).

This innovative solution is in full compliance with the corporate IT Governance Dual-Pillar Approach and the *reuse before buy before build* rationale. Again in 2023, it will lead to significant gains in terms of efficiency, economy of scale through shared resources, standardisation, harmonisation, reusability, and budgetary savings.

MyWorkplace will also contribute to REGIO's alignment to the new Commission Digital Strategy by gradually replacing the previous workflow tools in the coming years. As such, it will become the de-facto single workflow tool, serving REGIO's business process implementation needs but also of other shared management family DGs.

## ANNEX: PERFORMANCE TABLES

REGIO monitors its operational performance with regard to the below indicators twice a year, relying on the combination of assessment by competence centres and horizontal units and inputs on the state of programming and implementation by geographical units. The contribution of geographical units to deliver on these targets remains essential both in terms of substance and appropriate and reliable reporting.

### PART 1. Delivering on the Commission’s priorities: main outputs for 2023

<b>General objective:</b> A European Green Deal		
<b>Specific objective:</b> 1.1: Investments in climate		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
Output	Indicator	Target
Promoting and implementing the New European Bauhaus values in REGIO led programmes and initiatives	Organising the NEB prizes - Prizes ceremony announcing the winners	Q2 2023
	Number of programmes aiming for NEB projects	100
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 Member States /stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	> 20

<b>Specific objective:</b> 1. 2: Mobilising research and innovation		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
Output	Indicator	Target
Initiate general integration of green technologies in programmes	Amount dedicated to green innovation in 2021-27 programmes	At least EUR 3.4 billion <sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Allocation to IF029 “research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities, focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change”



**Specific objective:** 1.3: Just transition

*Related to spending programme: JTF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

**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 JTM in JTF territories)	Timely implementation of the technical assistance (TA) to manage the Just Transition Platform – Start of second TA framework contract	Q1 2023
	Number of meetings of JT Platform	2
Implementation of the Public Sector Loan Facility - Ensure take-up of the Facility and its advisory services.	Number of submitted proposals	At least 30

**External communication actions**

Output	Indicator	Target
European Week of Regions	Satisfaction survey: Level of satisfaction	>75%
	Number of attendees	10,000 (2019 as baseline)

**General objective: A Europe Fit for the Digital Age**

**Specific objective:** 2.1 Digital transformation

*Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

**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 Member States /stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	4

**Specific objective:** 2.2 Innovative and smart transformation

*Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

**Other important outputs**

<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
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 Member States /stakeholder engagement in terms of network meetings, platforms and working groups	12

**External communication actions**

<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
INFOREGIO, Cohesion Data Platform and Kohesio Website	Total visits	> 700,000

**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, JTF, EUSF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

**Evaluations and fitness checks**

Output	Indicator	Target
2014-2020 Ex-post evaluation of cohesion policy	1 <sup>st</sup> interim report delivered for all Work Packages	Q4 2023
Reporting evidence of cohesion policy contribution to EU development through evaluation activities	Annual summary reports - Art 53. Annual summary report & Synthesis of evaluation findings	Q4 2023
Improvement of Member States' evaluation capacity	Support initiatives carried out through the evaluation helpdesk: 1 summer school	Q2 2023

**Other important outputs**

Senior management is regularly informed about the progress in implementation of the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 period.	Number of implementation reports on 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 submitted for discussion at senior management level.	8
Successful completion of 2021-2027 negotiations	All programmes adopted	Q1 2023
Effective mobilisation of cohesion policy resources in response to crisis (including CRII, REACT-EU, CARE, FAST-CARE, [SAFE] amendments)	Timely adoption (within the regulatory deadline) of programme amendments	90%
Ensure effective 2014-2020 closure process	Closure guidelines disseminated through trainings covering the remaining Member States, which would ensure that all 27 Member States have been covered	5 Member States which were not covered in 2022
Encourage a wider uptake of financial instruments and support GUs and Member States in the implementation of financial instruments	Implementation of the 2023 FI-compass work programme – FI – campus conference and Member States specific support and other activities throughout the year	Q4 2023
Promotion of Simplified cost options and Financing not linked to costs, 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	8

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 country work programmes established with JASPERS and Member States	10
European Community of Practice on Partnership 2021-2027. The European Community of Practice on Partnership is functioning, sharing good practices, and is producing concrete recommendations for the possible update of the European Code of Conduct on partnership	Organisation of the plenary meeting creating a community of practice	Q1 2023
Implementation of the EU Teens4Green pilot action	Number of projects involving young people that are being implemented and presented on the EU Teens4Green participatory portal	50
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 2023	>500
Cohesion Open Data Platform	Updates to reflect implementation progress for all programmes	3 (March, September, and December)
	Publication of data stories on the 2021-2027 programming	5

**Specific objective: 3.2 Complementarity with structural reforms**

*Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

**Other important outputs**

<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
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 2023
Commission position on fulfilment of thematic enabling conditions established following notification on fulfilment from Member States	Decisions adopted within the regulatory deadline	For all concerned programmes

**Specific objective: 3.3 European semester**

*Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF*

**Main outputs in 2023:**

<b>Other important outputs</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
REGIO contribution to the European Semester	Contribution to the country Reports	Q2 2023

<b>Specific objective: 3.4 Demographic and social challenges</b>		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, JTF</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Support to quality and impactful investments aimed at integration of marginalised communities	Signed administrative agreement with the World Bank	Q3 2023

<b>Specific objective: 3.5 Urban and territorial development</b>		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Implementation of the support in transition to Functional Areas	Finalised action plans of supported functional areas	12
Cities Forum 2023	Event organised	Q1 2023
Evaluation of the 1st call for EUI-innovative actions call	10 selected urban innovations on New European Bauhaus	Q3 2023
Support to Urban Agenda (UA) for the EU	2 UAEU Partnerships receiving support for their activity	Q1 2023
Facilitated implementation and increased visibility for the 4 EU MRS (in the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic and Ionian, the Danube, and the Alpine Region)	Number of MRS events organised (four MRS Annual fora and one High-level Group meeting during MRS week/days in Brussels) with the focus on territorial embedding and implementation of green and digital transition and on communication.	5
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	140
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	12

Bilateral dialogues with Outermost Regions supporting their development strategies	Number of meetings	9
Implementation of the rolling action plan for a Long-term vision for rural areas	Toolkit for combination of funding for the development of rural areas available online	Q4 2023

#### External communication actions

Output	Indicator	Target
Media impact	Number of mentions of the policy portfolio in the Daily Press Review during the year	>5,500
External events	Number of RegioStars applications per Member State	At least 1
Integrated umbrella campaign EU in my Region	Percentage of the regional population reached by the regional communication campaigns	> 50%

<b>General objective: A Stronger Europe in the World</b>		
<b>Specific objective: 4.1 Neighbouring and enlargement</b>		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Appropriate cohesion policy input included in the Commission's Annual Enlargement Package in Q4	Number of country contributions provided to NEAR in the preparation of Annual Enlargement Package	7

<b>Specific objective: 4.2 Cohesion policy's role in external relations</b>		
<i>Related to spending programmes: ERDF, CF, ENI-CBC, IPA-CBC</i>		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Other important outputs</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Regional and urban policy dialogues with strategic partners	Number of dialogues including policy conclusions	At least 3
Successful implementation of the new International Urban and IURC	Number of thematic networking events	18

<b>External communication actions</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Major external events	Satisfaction survey - Satisfaction rate of Annual Interreg Event in the Member States holding the presidency	> 75%
	Number of attendees to the Cities forum	700



## Human resources management

<b>Objective:</b> REGIO employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business.		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Monitoring of the workforce allocation to priority areas	Complete the workload assessment of competence centres	Q2 2023
3rd REGIO Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan	Design, consult and adopt a new Equality Mainstreaming Work Plan starting 2023 building on the achievements of the 2022 Work Plan	Q1 2023
Implementation of actions linked to the 2023 Equality Mainstreaming Work plan	Number of equality related events (trainings, workshops, and staff activities) organised	5
	Percentage of achieved actions	100%
Implementation of the annual REGIO Training plan	Percentage of in-house trainings included in REGIO Training plan for 2023 organised through EU Learn by REGIO units by the end of the year	70%

## Sound financial management

<b>Objective:</b> 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.		
<b>Main outputs in 2023:</b>		
<b>Output</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Risk at payment or Residual total error rate	Becomes <2% of relevant expenditure
Effective controls: Legal and regular transactions	Estimated risk at closure	Remains <2% of relevant expenditure
Efficient controls	Budget execution	Becomes 100% of payment appropriations <sup>26</sup>
	Timely payments <sup>27</sup>	Remains 98% of payments (in value) made on time

<sup>26</sup> Not including assigned revenue

<sup>27</sup> Percentage of payments made within the applicable deadline (subject to budget availabilities)

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

## 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) aimed at the prevention, detection and correction of fraud.

### Main outputs in 2023:

Output	Indicator	Target
Support capacity building and dissemination of information to Member States on fraud prevention and detection	Number of presentations and training sessions offered	29
Financial corrections implemented as a follow-up of financial recommendations in OLAF final reports	% of financial corrections implemented for OLAF final case reports closed in the year	75%
Increase the systematic use of ARACHNE or alternative datamining tools available at national level	% of all programmes using ARACHNE	60%
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 Fraud Prevention and Detection Network (PFDNET) and its sub-groups.	Number of meetings per year, including those of the FPDNET and its sub-groups	At least 5

## 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 2023:

Output	Indicator	Target
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The IT systems running processes and financial transactions are efficiently supporting the implementation of 2014-2020 programming period, in alignment with BPT work plan	Ensure the continuity of 2014-2020 processes in WAVE and first part of the implementation of 2014-2020 closures in MyWorkplace	Q4 2023
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 2023 and aligned with BPT work plan.	Q4 2023
The financial transactions IT system (SFC 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 2023	Q4 2023
Business reporting system ensures continued provision of common and improved reporting and data services	Define a common business reporting system strategy for the CPR DGs and set up a REGIO's Data Strategy in collaboration with business units, BPT and the Local Data Correspondent	Q4 2023
Alignment with SUMMA and implementation of necessary features in SFC back-office systems and data migration in the Data Warehouse	Definition of all business requirements	Q2 2023
	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 2023
Migration from SharePoint on premise to SharePoint online	Migrate all relevant SharePoint sites to the SharePoint online platform	Q4 2023
Data standardised and imported in Kohesio	Standardised and ingested data (2014-2020)	27 Member States + Interreg/ETC
Knowledge and information effectively shared and reused within REGIO, in alignment with related corporate policies	RegioWiki pillars updated to take full account of the 21-27 period	4 out of 5 pillars
Raise awareness about data protection	75% of REGIO staff targeted by informative sessions for units and specific guidance for data breaches, data subject's requests, risk assessments and accountability	Q4 2023
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 2023

Implementation of the corporate principles for data governance for REGIO's key data assets	Share of implementation	80%
Compliance is attested for all IT systems in GRC for MFA/EU	Login compliance and annual security plan review	100%

## Sound environmental management

**Objective:** REGIO takes account of its environmental impact in its actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work, with the support of its respective EMAS Correspondents/EMAS Site Coordinators.

### Main outputs in 2022:

#### I. More efficient use of resources (energy, water, paper):

Output	Indicator	Target
Reducing office paper consumption	Number of printed pages	-5% (2019 as baseline)

#### II. Reducing CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent CO<sub>2</sub>, and other atmospheric emissions

Output	Indicator	Target
Contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to reaching the Commission's climate neutrality by 2030	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in kg derived from missions	-5% (2019 as baseline)
	Percentage of CO <sub>2</sub> emissions linked to REGIO events that are covered by carbon compensation schemes. REGIO will continue encouraging EMAS to develop a compensation scheme to offset the generated carbon emissions at corporate level	10% of total CO <sub>2</sub> emissions if corporate scheme is available

#### IV. Promoting green public procurement (GPP)

Output	Indicator	Target
Gradual introduction of GPP criteria in contracts and starting to monitor the process	Number of contracts with "green" provisions	Increase compared to 2022