



**European Committee
of the Regions**



Joining forces for a strong recovery
and a just transition

Joint Action Plan

between the European Committee of the Regions
and the European Commission
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy

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Elisa Ferreira
European Commissioner for
Cohesion Policy and Reforms

“Both during the crisis and now in the midst of recovery, Cohesion Policy proved to be the backbone of the EU development and solidarity models. Whatever the challenge, from green and just transition to digital revolution, from demographic changes to the vision for rural areas, cohesion policy is there to ensure that all regions benefit fully, and that no region is left behind.”



Apostolos Tzitzikostas
President of the European
Committee of the Regions

“The pandemic has proved we are stronger together and that cohesion is the pillar of our Union. We now share a huge responsibility: turning an unprecedented amount of EU investment into opportunities for all our citizens in their regions, cities and villages. By intensifying our cooperation we want to increase support for those who implement projects on the ground, make sure that structural funds work in synergy with the Recovery and Resilience Facility and other EU funds. Cohesion must be a fundamental value and a compass for all EU policies.”



Nathalie Sarrabezolles
Chair of the Commission for
Territorial Cohesion Policy and
EU Budget

“Cohesion Policy proved itself as an emergency tool during the pandemic and remains the most important investment tool in the European Union. The successful implementation of cohesion policy programmes in our cities and regions is key for a sustainable and socially-fair recovery. The European Committee of the Regions stands ready to cooperate with DG REGIO to promote the new cohesion policy 2021-2027 as a common EU value and to ensure solidarity across the EU.”

Objectives

The Joint Action Plan will cover **five priority areas of collaboration** between the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) setting concrete strategic goals to better support all regions during the current multiannual framework.

In the 2021-2027 programming period, there are more instruments, more opportunities and more investment possibilities than ever before, as a reaction to the COVID-19 crisis and the collective goal of a resilient, green and digital recovery. National, regional, and local governments are facing the unprecedented challenge of shaping and implementing investment programmes backed by the new MFF and Next Generation EU.

In this context, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the CoR agree to intensify their cooperation to:

- Help regions and cities plan and deliver investments backed by cohesion policy and just transition as part of a strong recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.
- Promote synergies between cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility and other EU recovery tools via a strong partnership between all relevant stakeholders.
- Partner with local and regional authorities in identifying synergies between different programmes to achieve the best result on the ground.
- Promote the concept of “cohesion as a value” and mainstream it across different EU policies.
- Promote cross-border co-operation and legal and practical solutions to overcome obstacles hampering it.
- Communicate on the added value of EU cohesion policy both as a crisis response tool, as well as for achieving a balanced, resilient and future oriented Europe’s recovery.
- Promote the use of Territorial Impact Analysis (TIA) in EU policymaking, in line with the Better Regulation Agenda.
- Monitor the application of the partnership principle and ensure an effective engagement of local and regional authorities in the preparation and implementation of Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for the 2021-2027 period.
- Stress the continued and renewed importance of Cohesion’s long-term aim to strengthen economic, social, and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities within the Union.

1. Supporting implementation

With the aim of supporting local and regional authorities and their administrative units managing the funds, the CoR and DG REGIO will cooperate on three main actions:

i) Mapping the existing needs and identify the available tools to promote capacity building in relation to implementing cohesion policy programmes 2021-2027¹.

The CoR should act as a catalyst and facilitator, making sure the voice of CoR partners is heard at both national and EU level. The CoR and DG REGIO should inform partners about the many opportunities under cohesion policy and increase the impact of the EU projects in the regions.

ii) Engaging CoR members and managing authorities for regional programmes in networking activities and dedicated info sessions, #CohesionAlliance online events and seminars, with an input from DG REGIO, where applicable.

iii) Use the European Week of Regions and Cities established framework and agreed objectives to provide a series of dedicated workshops/information sessions for participants, including CoR and DG REGIO partners.

2. Promote multilevel governance and synergies between cohesion policy, Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and other investment tools

In order to achieve this objective:

i) The CoR will assess with its opinions, its specific studies, as well as with the next annual regional and local Barometer, the respect of the partnership principle and the involvement of regions and cities in the programming and implementation of cohesion policy, as well as of National Recovery

¹ Under shared management capacity building of administrations managing the funds, beneficiaries, partners and sectoral or territorial actors relevant to the implementation of the ERDF/CF is the responsibility of the Member States, using funds under their programmes.

Plans, and inform the European Commission about the outcome, in order to ensure complementarity and consistency with the goals and instruments of cohesion policy.

ii) The Commission services will provide information and guidance on how to integrate funding from cohesion policy and the RRF in the context of capacity building actions to all stakeholders, including CoR members.

iii) The CoR will involve the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and other Commission services as appropriate in the organisation of the annual Recovery and Resilience Forum.

iv) The CoR will organise with the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy a session on “Multi-level Dialogue on Just Transition”, within the framework of Just Transition Platform meetings, to take stock of the implementation of the Just Transition Fund and promote coordination across all levels of government.

3. Promote the idea of cohesion as an overall value in the EU construct

The Commission services and the CoR will work together to profile cohesion as an overall value of the EU through the following actions:

i) Continue their active engagement in particular in the CoR strategy on cohesion as an overall value of the EU and mainstream it across relevant policies.

ii) Continue their close collaboration in developing and communicating the above also in the context of the annual regional and local Barometer, where this issue should play an important role.

iii) Implement Joint actions to promote cohesion in view of the Conference on the Future of Europe, notably by inviting EURegionsWeek partners to register their session and report on its take-away onto the platform made available by the Conference.

iv) Cooperate in the implementation of the key recommendations of the Long Term Vision for Rural Areas.

4. Strengthen the cross-border co-operation in Europe

Border regions in the EU have suffered severely as a consequence of closing borders during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the CoR will work closely together to draw the lessons of the crisis and make border regions thriving forces for more cohesion and a resilient recovery. By doing so, the following actions could be envisaged:

i) Cooperation in carrying out a cross-border Forum to discuss the future vision of cross-border regions in Europe (the details of the collaboration for this forum will be further clarified).

ii) Intensification of the common work to remove obstacles and for strengthening cross-border co-operation.

iii) Development of a joint vision of border regions, going beyond funding, for the debate on the future of Europe.

5. Communicating cohesion's added value on the ground

The European Week of Regions and Cities constitutes, for 19 years now, the main expression of cooperation between the Commission, notably DG REGIO, and CoR as natural partner. Where appropriate, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the CoR will consider undertaking joint initiatives to raise awareness of the cohesion policy funds' role in tackling the pandemic emergency, in boosting the green and digital transitions and in strengthening the economic, social, and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities within the Union.

Possible actions may include:

- i) Digital dialogues involving the Commissioner responsible for Cohesion and Reforms or the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, as appropriate, and the President of the CoR, the Chair of the CoR Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and the EU Budget and other CoR members, as appropriate.
- ii) The Commissioner's participation in #CohesionAlliance events dedicated to discussing the role of cohesion policy for a successful recovery and the need to promote cohesion as a fundamental value across all EU policies.
- iii) Coordinated communication activities to promote cohesion across all EU policies and illustrate cohesion policy and reforms' contribution to a green and digital recovery, notably by relaying concrete examples and testimonials of stories on the ground, e.g. optimizing the use of CoR's rich series of [stories on recovery](#).

Governance

The final plan, agreed between the Commissioner responsible for Cohesion and Reforms and the CoR President takes into account the overall priorities of the European Union, as well as the mandate and work programmes of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and the EU Budget of the CoR.

The cabinets of the Commissioner responsible for Cohesion and Reforms and of the CoR President, in cooperation with the COTER Chair and their services, will ensure political steer and support for the implementation of the joint initiatives by the services.

This joint Action Plan includes a process to evaluate and monitor the actions listed above. The concerned services of the Commission and the CoR will take stock twice a year on the progress made and on other issues linked to the co-operation.

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Elisa Ferreira

European Commissioner for
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European Committee of the Regions

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States. Our members are elected presidents of regions, regional councillors, mayors and local councillors - democratically accountable to more than 446 million European citizens. The CoR's main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.

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