

panorama

inforegio



Europe 2020: Competitiveness, cooperation and cohesion for all regions

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OPEN DAYS – Jump right in

Welcome to OPEN DAYS 2010, and to this special edition of Panorama, designed to give you an insight into the themes around which this year's event is based: competitiveness, cohesion and cooperation.

The role of regions and cities is vital when it comes to the thematic priorities of the OPEN DAYS, which also represent key elements of the new Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strength of cohesion policy is that it transforms Europe's strategic priorities into actual policies on the ground.

Panorama explores the three strands, taking a look at projects that are working to make the abstract a reality and considers the context of issues such as regional and international cooperation and how cohesion can best be boosted.

Use this edition to get the best out of your OPEN DAYS experience and if things get a little slow, why not take our quiz and test yourself on just how much you know about cohesion policy!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'J. Hahn'.

Johannes Hahn

Member of the European Commission in charge of regional policy

EUROPE'S REGIONAL POLICY HELPING TO DELIVER THE EU 2020 STRATEGY

The EU economy in 2020 must be innovative, green and inclusive, capable of overcoming recession. The Strategy is being put in place now and EU regional policy is embracing its priorities. Many of the events taking place during the OPEN DAYS are a great opportunity to show how all regions can endorse and achieve the same goals.

The worst economic crisis since the 1930s has hit the world over the last two years, reversing much of the progress achieved in Europe since 2000. The financial crisis and subsequent downturn has hit all regions across the Union, bringing with it high levels of unemployment, sluggish growth and excessive levels of debt.

The economic situation is improving, but the recovery is still fragile and the world is moving on fast. Long-term challenges, including globalisation, pressure on resources, climate change and an ageing population – are intensifying. This is why the European Commission brought forward the Europe 2020 Strategy last March, based on the central principle that Europe can succeed if it acts collectively, as a Union. To quote the Commission's President Barroso: "The crisis is a wake-up call... 'business as usual' would consign us to a gradual decline".

2020 in a nutshell

The Strategy spells out five EU goals for 2020 (to be broken down into national targets):

- 75% of the population aged 20-64 in employment
- 3% of the EU's GDP invested in research and development
- successful implementation of the EU's environmental goals, i.e. a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions, and a 20% increase in the use of renewable energies
- a minimum of 40% of the younger generation to obtain a tertiary degree, and 10% fewer early school leavers
- 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty.

The 2020 vision

The EU 2020 Strategy puts forward a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century. A dynamic roadmap, it outlines the policies and initiatives not only to underpin recovery and get Europe out of the crisis, but also to foster a new type of economy, in a society which is smarter, greener and more inclusive.

Given the current economic climate, meeting these objectives will be no easy task. However, the Europe 2020 Strategy is focused. It concentrates on three key areas where action is most needed in order to boost Europe's competitiveness, productivity, growth and economic convergence.

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more efficient, greener and more competitive economy
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy, where all communities and regions participate and flourish.

Crucial timing for OPEN DAYS

The debate on the EU 2020 Strategy, its policies and future budget will be in full swing during the 8th EU OPEN DAYS – the biggest annual event in the calendar for Europe's cities and regions. A host of seminars and workshops will give the floor to regions to make their voice heard, whether to exchange views on how to implement the new Strategy at a local level or discuss areas of good practice.

And regions have a key role to play. Delivering the 2020 vision will require active support and take-up across all regions of the EU. Drawing on the lessons of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, the question of ownership is crucial. European regional policy has an integrated framework for investment, tried and tested delivery systems, ownership on the ground, progressive partnerships and cross-sectoral approaches. It can contribute to Europe 2020's success by strengthening collaboration with local and regional stakeholders.

Going for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth

EU regional policy is the Community's largest source of investment in the real economy. By focusing support on a limited number of priorities that meet the goals of *smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*, regional policy can provide the targeted investment essential for creating the right conditions for lasting growth. With its strong emphasis on knowledge, innovation, skills and green credentials, regional policy is a catalyst for development opportunities in the future.

The bulk of regional policy resources – around €230 billion – are already chiefly geared towards investments in the key areas of this agenda – in cutting edge research and technological development, innovation, information and communication technologies, business development and training. Regional policy programmes across the EU regions successfully back integrated investments in high-speed internet, smart transport and energy infrastructure, energy efficiency and renewable energies, and green public procurement – all key elements for achieving the EU 2020 goals.

Regional funds – a long-term vision

Whether through direct investment for business start-ups, or by directly funding business support services, EU regional funds will help grow business across the EU. Regional development funds target support to cutting edge companies as well as financing skills development and business infrastructure. Investment will also help to promote better cooperation between business, research institutes and public authorities.

Regional policy's rolling programme of investment in the new 'knowledge economy', in higher value sectors like bioscience and information and communication technologies (ICT), will help to stimulate small business innovation and creativity for decades to come. It will continue to back new ICT companies, invest in broadband connectivity and help thousands of local firms adopt new e-business practices.

The OPEN DAYS provide an ideal platform to showcase good practice. They also offer an opportunity to demonstrate how Europe's regional policy can help to achieve the EU 2020 objectives, and maintain stable growth with increased potential in education, research and the battle against climate change.



The '**Centre of Excellence in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology**' set up in Slovenia with support from EU regional funds, is another success story. This centre is working to overcome the traditional lack of cooperation between public research institutes and business.

By giving businesses access to highly specialised equipment, new opportunities have opened up for more advanced applied research development.

FIND OUT MORE

<http://nin.ijs.si/nano.htm>

The '**Corallia Technology Hub**' in Greece shows how support from EU regional funds is driving innovation in Europe's regions. This cluster, backed by European regional development investment, brings together industry and research organisations in the area of micro-electronics.

Not only have research efforts received a significant financial boost, but the project has also sparked ambitious spin-off ventures thanks to investment incentives offered to business angels.

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.corallia.org/>

WHAT IS REGIONETWORK 2020?

RegioNetwork 2020 has been developed by DG Regional Policy (DG REGIO) with the aim of providing a web-based community information service. It will be an on-line professional networking site for European regions to share news and information, find partners and link up on European regional policy.

WHAT ARE ITS OBJECTIVES?

- To offer a dynamic platform of exchange between regions on subjects of interest and good practice in regional development projects and policy – on anything from sustainable development and health, to clean transport
- To foster and encourage networking among regions by offering a central point of communication and a real social network

What are its key functions?

As a member you will be able to discover the profiles of other regions, follow their activities, and find partners for projects. Through the discussion forums, you will also be able to share good practices in regional development. The group functions will allow existing networks to exchange information and keep in touch more easily, as well as support the establishment of new networks. The platform will also include areas for showcasing project stories, and sharing links to video and image galleries.

Who can create a profile?

Users will be able to create a profile either by region or as an individual. A regional profile will provide standardised information on the region. Individuals with an interest in regional policy will be able to create an individual user profile. All registered profiles will include wall functionality for updating on the latest news or events, or if looking for project partners etc.

What constitutes a legitimate member?

A regional representative will be confirmed by the relevant region and then approved by a REGIO administrator. Individual representatives (e.g. academics, representatives of public authorities, students, working in areas related to regional development policy) will be approved by a REGIO administrator.

Who can create a group?

Any registered user can create a group around a specific project or subject. The creator of the group is responsible for moderating content and validating new members. If you are connected to a group, you will receive automatic updates on any news posted by other members.

When will it be ready to use?

RegioNetwork 2020 will be launched during OPEN DAYS 2010! Sign up and join the on-line community!

It will be a great way of keeping alive and multiplying the value of the OPEN DAYS, enabling the sharing of information and ideas, through a virtual community, all year round.

FIND OUT MORE :

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regionetwork2020>



REGIONAL POLICY: DRIVING COMPETITIVENESS IN THE REGIONS THROUGH...

INNOVATION...

If we want to sustain high-productivity jobs as required in today's global environment, finance social systems in an ageing society and become a world leader in clean technologies and energy efficiency, then Europe's 2020 sustainable economic growth agenda must be a key EU priority for the foreseeable future, especially if we want to remain in the frame in an increasingly competitive world.

Science, research and innovation are at the heart of the Europe 2020 sustainable economic growth agenda. To take Europe out of the economic crisis, we have to innovate, invest in research and transfer it into jobs.

We need to step up to the mark

To make this happen, the Strategy spells out a spending target of 3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D. It also aims for universal broadband coverage by 2013, along with targets that show half of Europeans shopping online and using online public services by 2015, with all citizens expecting internet speeds of 30 Mbps or above by 2020.

This is ambitious. Currently, only 1% of Europeans have fast fibre-based broadband, compared to 12% of Japanese and 15% of South Koreans. Spending on R&D is below 2% of GDP. We are faced with fierce competition from countries which are investing at a scale and speed we may struggle to match, and because we are investing less in R&D than the US or Japan, and other new competitors like South Korea, we are lagging behind. We also need to boost research in all areas to stay competitive – spending on science is rising in China and India.

Missing the opportunities

There are also large disparities within the EU in terms of R&D spending. The link between research, education and innovation is still insufficiently supported, yet imperative for growth and job creation. To shape tomorrow's future today, Europe needs to step up a gear – become more inventive, and react more quickly to changing markets and consumer preferences. Plugging the R&D gap is crucial.

THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR 2020

As the lion's share of the EU budget, regional policy investment through the Structural Funds will be key to achieving these goals. Regional policy programmes across the EU regions already successfully back integrated investments in high-speed internet, smart transport and energy infrastructure, energy efficiency and renewable energies – all key elements for achieving the EU 2020 goals. This must continue.

We also need to continue to strengthen efforts to develop Europe's R&D performance, by providing first-rate research facilities. Developing world-class labs, supporting technology transfer and collaboration between research institutions, government and the business sector, improving research capacity in small firms, and promoting innovation in business models, in new modes of transport, in energy and information, in producing goods, in providing health-care, and in delivering public services – this is the innovation that will drive forward growth and generate jobs.



Europe's 2020 sustainable economic growth agenda drives competitiveness in the regions through science, research and innovation

Light at the end of the tunnel

To achieve this we must have a sense of determination, and work in partnership with the private sector and key stakeholders – business, research institutes, academia and public authorities. The numerous seminars and workshops taking place during OPEN DAYS 2010 will provide an excellent arena for regions and other stakeholders to exchange ideas and knowledge about how to best harness regional funds to promote innovation for the benefit of citizens and businesses in the regions.



MARE NOVUM

In Sweden, people love the outdoor life, not least the sea, which is why Gothenburg, Sweden's second largest city, is home to Mare Novum, a centre of marine innovation and business development, which is leading the way in bringing together research and business with the development of conservation and the sustainable use of marine ecosystems.

Mare Novum is a partnership between the University of Gothenburg and the five northern coastal municipalities of Strömstad, Tanum, Sotenäs, Munkedal and Lysekil. Its main modus operandi is to serve as an arena for collaboration between companies, researchers and society within the framework of developing support for innovation with high-end content in the marine sector – conservation and the sustainable use of marine ecosystems. Mare Novum's Project Manager, Johan Norling, describes it as "a gate for industry to the academic world". It mediates in cooperation between industry and academia in joint R&D programmes, arranging forums for discussion, seminars on relevant topics and support in commercialisation of innovative marine-based ideas.

When asked about funding, Norling explained that in his view "EU funding is fundamental for this type of ambitious initiative", and that "it has brought many different benefits to the project: the foundation of a solid plan with a realistic budget, efficient use of funding, more opportunities – all these factors together should be regarded as a quality label". The overall estimated project cost is about €821 000, with the EU contributing nearly €403 500 and the rest, about €417 500, coming from the University of Gothenburg, the Region of Västra Götaland and the Fyrbodalen regional municipal association.

There is also an important regional aspect to Mare Novum – cooperation with Mare Life in Norway has brought Oslo and Gothenburg closer together. Mare Novum, as a kind of broker, is bringing research and industry together in the marine sector. The lesson learned so far, as Johan Norling notes, "is that you need to have a long-term view when working with new ideas, start-ups and enterprises, as well as building up networks or optimising already existing ones". Sound advice for other EU regional projects.

THE PROJECT RUNS OVER THE PERIOD 2008-10

Estimated project cost: €821 000

EU contributing: €403 500

National contributions: €417 500

FIND OUT MORE :

www.marenovum.se

Analysis of marine organisms at Kristineberg marine research centre

... 'GREEN BUSINESS'...

Cohesion policy is an essential instrument for establishing a low-carbon, resource-efficient and competitive economy. This is one of the major challenges set out in the new Europe 2020 Strategy.

Cohesion policy specifically helps regions develop synergies between environmental protection and growth.

It encourages them to look at the fight against climate change and keeping the EU at the leading edge of green technologies as an opportunity for growth. Almost half the Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom) have already integrated indicators for CO₂ emission reductions in their cohesion programmes. France has already developed a special carbon calculation tool for monitoring CO₂ emissions produced by all projects co-funded by the EU.

Europe has set itself ambitious targets in terms of fighting climate change: it plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20% and to have renewable energy make up 20% of its energy consumption by 2020.

By allocating €48 billion to measures supporting the EU's climate objectives and the establishment of a low-carbon emitting economy, cohesion policy is contributing to the achievement of these objectives: €23 billion are earmarked for railways, €6 billion for clean urban transport, €4.8 billion for renewable energy and €4.2 billion for energy efficiency.

The competitiveness of Europe's regions is the main motivation behind the challenge to make efficient use of resources. At the end of 2008, the European Commission adopted a proposal to speed up investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy in housing. The aim is to make energy savings, reduce emissions and lower fuel bills for those most at risk, at the same time providing a boost for the construction sector to get it moving again.



Business Center Lower Austria – one of the largest office buildings in Europe which demonstrates the passivehouse standard in action

THE GREEN CATALYST FOR TECHNOLOGY AND JOB CREATION

Think of Austria and you think of beautiful mountains and delicious pastries, but today it is becoming a by-word for innovation in competitiveness, cooperation and cohesion – take the Green Building Cluster of Lower Austria.

The Green Building Cluster involves about 200 partners and is one of six initiatives currently being managed by ecoplus, the regional business agency – also part of the Regional Innovation Strategy for Lower Austria. The Cluster strengthens already existing competencies in the area of sustainable building and green living. It provides pre-competitive support for small and medium-sized enterprises, linking existing strengths with new ideas and innovation from research activities at universities, research institutions and higher technical schools. The project is financed by private sources such as membership and service fees, and from public sources, including the ERDF within the period 2007-13. Alois Geisslhofer, Cluster manager of the Green Building Cluster explained that “the EU's share of the investment contribution has been critical in supporting the project, and without this and the pre-competitive support from the cluster initiatives, these types of projects would not have been realised”.

Dedicated to the sustainable ideal, it has a particular eye on passive house standards, healthy interiors with enhanced living comfort, while not neglecting the energy-efficient refurbishment of older buildings. Up to 50% of new homes in the region are being built as passive energy homes, including the more traditional timber-built houses.

The ecoplus management team of five also plays an important role in influencing the political and administrative framework for industry issues such as building codes, financial incentives, and awareness-raising for green building. With an estimated 6 000 to 9 000 new or safeguarded permanent jobs, and a volume of building output of approximately €750m to €1b per year, the Cluster explains Geisslhofer, “is a catalyst for technology, job creation and added value for Lower Austrian companies”.

THE PROJECT RUNS OVER THE PERIOD 2007-13
New or safeguarded permanent jobs: 6 000 to 9 000
Up to 50% of new homes – passive energy homes
Annual refurbishment rate to reach 3%
Volume of building output: €750m – €1b per year

FIND OUT MORE :
<http://www.ecoplus.at/ecoplus>

SMEs as priority beneficiaries

Cohesion policy helps Member States and regions in their research and innovation efforts. Promoting eco-innovation, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), features among the priorities. In 2007-13, out of the €27 billion of investments earmarked for SMEs, €3 billion target the promotion of environment-friendly products and production processes. The Finnish group Lahti Cleantech is an illustrative example of this mechanism. EU investment (€1.5 million) has encouraged innovation and the development ecological technologies here, bringing together businesses, educational bodies and regional authorities. The results speak for themselves: 170 new jobs have been created, 20 new clean technology businesses have emerged and the project has attracted more than €30 million of investments in total.

Cohesion policy continually encourages exchanges of experiences, good practices and methodologies, notably through the initiative 'Regions for Economic Change'. The OPEN DAYS organise events in the regions to examine new solutions.



... AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

European regions have not escaped the global crisis. Cohesion policy has enabled regions to deal with the crisis in the short-term, at the same time establishing foundations for growth in the medium and longer-term.

Cohesion policy has played an important role in the European economic recovery plan adopted by the European Commission in 2008. An arsenal of measures has been put in place to provide support to the regions as they deal with the crisis in the short-term. Advance payments to Member States in 2009 were increased. This served to inject cash during the initial phase of the cohesion policy programmes so that payments could be made more quickly to those running the projects. The hundreds of 'major projects' (total cost in excess of €50 million), the adoption process of which was simplified, are veritable wheels of industry that make a clear contribution to stimulating the European economy.

Taking the long-term route

However, the 'rationale' behind the policy and its objectives are clearly long-term-based. It aims to promote sustainable growth and reduce socio-economic disparities within the European Union. With €347 billion of investments planned for 2007-13, it represents a stable source of funding for European regions.

Cohesion policy puts an emphasis on what are referred to as 'intelligent investments', meaning in job-creating sectors, where growth potential is enormous.

The aim is to get local economies back in business by focusing investments on areas such as research and development, clean technologies, sustainable modes of transport, broadband telecommunication networks and energy efficiency. Under the European recovery plan, Member States can modify their cohesion policy programmes in order to boost investments in these areas. In the future, there are plans for cohesion policy to orientate even more towards these key sectors so that it remains in line with the economic priorities of the EU, as set out in the EU 2020 Strategy.

To put European regions on track towards growth, cohesion policy is offering priority support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the backbone of the European economy. These businesses face increasing difficulties when looking to secure funds in a financial environment now wary of risk. For example, the European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) are encouraging Member States and regions to use the 'JEREMIE' initiative, introduced to help companies secure loans.

Cohesion policy, driving overall growth

Why does cohesion policy contribute to overall growth? Because it gets underused regional resources working. It brings together local and regional actors who are in the best position to know what a region's needs and assets are, in respect of European priorities. It encourages regions in difficulty to interact with the more advanced regions in order to trigger a domino effect. Estimates show that from 2000 to 2009, cohesion policy programmes increased the GDP of regions lagging behind in development (under 'Objective 1') by 0.5% in the EU-15 and 3.7% in the EU-10. These figures speak for themselves...

FIND OUT MORE:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funds/recovery/



Danish cool – modeling the By Groth AW10 collection

FASHION ACCELERATOR – DANISH COOL

The 'D' in Denmark could be said to stand for Design, as over the years Denmark has become synonymous with creative innovation in fashion and design. Fashion Accelerator, a project to develop and internationalise Danish home-grown fashion companies and supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is helping to push this new found 'coolness of Denmark' image.

Fashion Accelerator provides small and medium-sized companies trying to establish themselves, such as 'By Groth', with the basic tools they will need to survive in the market place and evolve. More directly, it provides knowledge, business advice, leads on how to expand networks and coaching in how to face-off and deal with new challenges – the basic tenets of business and new business development.

By Groth is one of 15 fashion companies which are benefitting from the support of Fashion Accelerator and EU funding. Peter Koppel, Project Leader of Fashion Accelerator for the managing authority, the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (EBST), was adamant that "the funding was a basic condition. We could not carry the project through without the funding." Project costs are estimated at around €1 592 000 with, as Peter Koppel explained, "half of it coming from the Regional Fund, 23% from the Danish Government and a similar amount from the two regions – Greater Copenhagen and Jutland (middle). The rest, around €80 000, are paid by the participating companies".

Under the current financial climate, support, especially EU funding, is indispensable. Peter Koppel is very clear, "The project has re-motivated participating companies to focus on growth, internationalisation and professionalism in management to secure long-term survival".

A second round of the project saw 22 larger companies join. According to EBST's first evaluations, explained Mr Koppel, "Fashion Accelerator has influenced the ability to innovate and cooperate in 65% of the first group of 15 companies".

Obviously, EU funding for this and other similar projects has proved essential and well placed in helping to develop the business potential of such companies.

THE PROJECT RUNS FROM 2008 TO THE END OF 2010
Estimated project cost: €1 592 000
ERDF contribution: 50%
Danish government: 23%
Greater Copenhagen & Jutland Regions: 22%
Participating companies: €80 000

FIND OUT MORE:
www.startvaekst.dk

EUROPEAN COHESION: MAKING DIVERSITY WORK

Cohesion policy – or regional policy – aims to ensure that no-one is left behind, by encouraging all European cities and regions to make the most of their individual assets and potential. It's all about bringing regions closer together in economic and social terms, reducing disparities and moving towards balanced development throughout the EU. The Lisbon Treaty elevated the goal of 'territorial cohesion' to treaty status, explicitly recognising Europe's territorial diversity and endorsing the need for convergence.

The Europe 2020 Strategy – the EU's new roadmap for sustainable, economic growth – recognises the strategic role of EU cohesion policy. Published by the European Commission in March, the new Strategy calls for the creation of a "high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion". Of the five headline targets outlined in the Strategy, two refer directly to cohesion: By 2020, 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed, and 20 million fewer people should be at risk of poverty.

Structural funding for concrete change

European cohesion policy is uniquely placed to contribute to these goals, using its funding mechanisms – the Structural Funds – to translate the Europe 2020 targets into concrete projects on the ground. Creating more and better jobs across Europe is already a priority for cohesion policy in the current 2007-13 period. Additionally, a total of €11 billion has been

allocated for social inclusion during this period, and is being used to alleviate poverty and segregation of marginalised communities such as ethnic minorities, disabled people or the elderly.

URBAN REGENERATION AT THE HEART OF COHESION

The urban challenge: Dealing with the contrasts of opportunity and deprivation.

Cities offer the most employment opportunities, but are also home to areas of great deprivation.

The solution: Targeting disadvantaged neighbourhoods to reduce inner-city disparities and enabling city-wide socio-economic development.

How? By identifying the needs of local communities and involving them in regeneration.

Prove it! Two recent examples include better housing for marginalised communities and more energy-efficient buildings. Both have been made possible by new rules under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Creating a sense of local ownership

Cohesion cannot simply be imposed from above. To a large degree, it depends on the initiative of individual regions and cities across Europe. Cohesion policy recognises this by helping to develop strong partnerships between local stakeholders, the different levels of administration and citizens themselves. It also encourages contacts between regions and cities. This may be through exchanges of information and best practices, through territorial cooperation, and not least through learning and networking opportunities such as the OPEN DAYS.

Demonstrating European solidarity is especially crucial in the aftermath of financial, economic and social crises. Further challenges such as globalisation, climate change, energy security, demographic change and social polarisation will also inevitably affect social and economic disparities in the future. Fostering cohesion will therefore remain an important challenge for European cohesion policy. The workshops dedicated to cohesion at OPEN DAYS 2010 offer a timely starting point for reflection on how this can be achieved.



Football unites divided communities

Sport is a great way of overcoming social barriers. It can have a unique effect on divided societies and none more so than in the case of Northern Ireland. For years, religious sectarianism among fans of Northern Ireland's football team had plagued the atmosphere at national matches, causing unease among supporters or even driving them away. This is despite the fact that the Northern Ireland team has always had players from both the Protestant and Catholic communities.

Football For All

'Football For All', an initiative of the Irish Football Association in 1998, forged a partnership with the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council, Sports Council Northern Ireland and Amalgamation of Official Northern Ireland Supporters Clubs in order to address sectarianism in football. This initiative has been encouraged and assisted by the EU's PEACE Programme whose overall objective is to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

Dedicated Northern Ireland fans were themselves the catalyst for change. They were weary of sectarianism plaguing the games and took it upon themselves to encourage a friendlier atmosphere. It is a long-term project committed to achieving the same inclusive atmosphere among fans that features in the national and international teams of Northern Ireland. The results of this dedication have been gradually seen over the past eight years, leading to a large increase in the number of followers of the Northern Irish team.

The support and dedication of the Northern Ireland fans in tackling sectarianism has received international recognition not only from the EU but also from the IOC (International Olympic Committee), the UEFA-endorsed Brussels International Supporters Award's Body, the Metro Éireann Media and Multi-Cultural Awards (Ireland) and Sports Business ISEM Awards (UK).



RESPECT FESTIVAL

This was held in March 2009 before a Poland versus Northern Ireland match at the home of Crusaders Football Club in North Belfast. It was an intercultural and cross community event involving both Poland and Northern Ireland fans, which included free football skills coaching for everyone, free face painting and a friendly match for fans.

THE STORY OF WORLD UNITED

Belfast's own intercultural football team, made up of players who are refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world

Key facts:

- Started in 2003 by IFA Community Relations Department.
- Run by the IFA in cooperation with the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) and PEACE II.
- Goal: To provide a football team that reflected the increasingly diverse population of Northern Ireland and offered a means of social integration.

World United is putting true diversity in front of local people. It is also a means of welcoming newcomers from overseas and helping them settle into the community by offering them social opportunities. The players themselves have delivered anti-racism workshops in partnership with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the IFA throughout Belfast.

FIND OUT MORE :

<http://www.worldunitedni.co.uk/index.html>

Challenging Racism through Sport

Further afield, in Romania, Italy, Bulgaria and Albania, the 'Come with us and be the change!' pilot project is all about integrating Roma people. Funded under the ERDF, it provides an opportunity for many different approaches to integration. One of them is 'Challenging Racism through Sports', and it will also be working with sports personalities in Italy and Romania to promote racial understanding. The project is aiming to gain support from UEFA as well as FARE and FIFA to fund a joint anti-racism campaign across Europe.



'LOVE FOOTBALL. HATE BIGOTRY'

This advertising campaign in March 2009 featured the ERDF logo. The bright, mostly green design was displayed on billboards around Belfast as well as being paraded at Windsor football ground (the Northern Ireland team's stadium) prior to some matches.

BOOSTING COOPERATION THROUGH MACRO REGIONS

From the Baltic Sea to the Danube Basin – macro region models of cooperation for the EU

Macro regions apply the same principles of regional policy, but on a super-size scale to avoid artificial geographical barriers or national borders. Their relevance forms part of a wider reflection on the future of EU cohesion policy post-2013. In this article two such regions come under the spotlight, the Baltic Sea Region and the Danube Basin. What can they teach us about regional cooperation?

Changing dreams into reality in the Danube

The Danube is one of Europe's most evocative rivers, conjuring up visions of stately waltzes and the elegance of bygone eras. It is also a major artery as it snakes eastwards across the continent from the Black Forest to empty into the Black Sea almost 3 000 kilometres away.

The Commission is now working to develop the huge potential of this extensive region. The Danube Strategy will be presented by the Commission at the end of 2010 and is the second such Strategy to be developed at the macro regional level.

The initiative will help to eradicate the unequal legacy of the past as huge economic, social and infrastructure disparities developed between countries, which, once natural partners, were artificially separated for decades by the Iron Curtain.

WHY IS CLOSE COOPERATION NEEDED?

By linking 14 countries, eight within the EU and six currently outside, the Danube provides a shared focal point for the 115 million people living within its reach. It cuts across national boundaries. Developments in one part of this major inland waterway can have a devastating impact hundreds of kilometres away as the victims of pollution, flooding and transport bottlenecks know to their cost.

Thinking big in the Baltic

The EU Baltic Sea Strategy was launched last year, bringing together eight Member States (Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) to address

pressing challenges, including the deteriorating environmental state of the Sea, poor transport links, barriers to trade and energy supply concerns – problems exacerbated by a lack of effective coordination.

Eighty flagship projects were selected, including, for example, the high speed 'Rail Baltica' link aiming to connect Warsaw to Tallinn by 2013, phasing-out the use of phosphates in detergents, and an 'energy market interconnection plan'. Implementation for a number of projects is already underway.

Bringing together the real expertise

The success of both macro regional initiatives will depend on the input from individuals, organisations and institutions familiar with the problems they encounter and aware of the potential opportunities. The Commission will process all the contributions from stakeholders into a coherent strategy.

The exercise can cover a host of themes: transport, energy, environment, risk prevention, socio-economic development, education and culture. Proposals that are as practical and concrete as possible will have the best chances of success. For instance, the Danube River Basin hosts more than 300 species of birds, some very rare, and action is urgently needed to ensure their existence is not threatened by industrial and agricultural pollution. The network of inland waterways is also ripe for serious development. Currently, navigation on the Danube represents just 10% of that on the Rhine.

The projects ultimately selected will be financed from existing European, national and regional budgets and programmes, rather than rely on new funding, aiming to harness to maximum effect the considerable amounts of EU money available in both regions.

The question of whether macro regions could become an important medium for programming and delivering EU funding may well be a key issue in the broader debate, and one which will be a focal point for many of the workshops and seminars during OPEN DAYS 2010.

The EU Baltic Sea Strategy addresses and tackles pressing challenges to restore and preserve the beauty of the Baltic Sea coastline



Simplifying the running of a macro region – EGTC

European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTC) provide a way for groups of regions from different Member States to come together and work to one set of legal requirements. This simplifies the situation since it means that there is no ambiguity regarding which country's laws they should be following and since the group then has a legal identity, meaning they can hold assets, hire staff and create their own structure.

The system was introduced by Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and the Council on 5 July 2006.

What can an EGTC do?

An EGTC can be set up to organise and manage cross-border, transnational or interregional cooperation programmes or projects. In addition, an EGTC may be set up for other acts of cooperation, with or without a financial contribution from the European Union.

EGTC – making it easier for groups of regions to establish:

cross-border transport

health services

joint energy agencies for using renewable resources

bilingual information systems in border regions

a cooperation project under the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development

At the same time an EGTC is potentially a platform for overall regional development across borders, allowing both policy formulation and practical implementation.

How is an EGTC set up and by whom?

EGTCs can be set up by regional, local and/or central/national authorities or other bodies governed by public law (e.g. universities, museums, regional development agencies, etc.) or associations of such authorities or bodies.

The future partners must sign a convention and adopt statutes, which must be notified to the relevant national authorities. The latter have three months to approve the participation of prospective members and must substantiate any refusals they may make by referring to the Regulation. EGTC members must be located in at least two Member States; participation of members from third countries is not excluded, but subject to some further conditions.

Member States should have adopted national laws or administrative measures to implement the EGTC Regulation by mid-2007, although there were delays. However, this is now more or less complete.

Taking the EGTC to the next level

By 1 August 2011, the Commission has to present a report on the application of the EGTC Regulation including proposals for amendments where appropriate and it is likely the report will include ways to clarify and simplify the system.



EURODISTRICT SAARMOSELLE

The SaarMoselle territory on the French-German border encompasses a population of more than 1.1 million and represents only a part of the cross-border cooperation programme for 'La Grande Région'. Cooperation arrangements were initiated more than 10 years ago by the association 'Zukunft SaarMoselle Avenir' and have resulted in the completion of a number of cross-border projects.

Today the locally elected representatives want to take the cross-border cooperation further. Projects to be presented by the EGTC would be co-funded under the cooperation programme and may cover cross-border spatial planning, tourism, bilingual training or joint socio-economic development.

COOPERATION BEYOND THE EU

Familiar issues, different world

The challenges of bringing diverse regions closer together have given the EU extensive experience in cohesion policy. From large-scale infrastructure projects to community-building measures, the European Commission has seen every side of the debate. Now countries outside the EU are benefitting from this experience as they adapt the concepts of regional policy to their own national situation.

In switching the focus of one small section of the Directorate-General for regional policy from the less developed regions of the EU to building up relations with non-member countries we often find ourselves talking to countries with great variety in the economic performance of their territories and which are increasingly seen as future motors of world economic growth. That means countries like Brazil, Russia and China. We are also dealing with states which are not eligible under the European Regional Development Fund and never will be.

So why do it?

The first answer comes from the OPEN DAYS of 2006 when Professor Michael Spence challenged the EU to share its considerable expertise and success in regional policy with other countries seeking to achieve the same objectives. He was echoing comments in a similar vein made by the UN and the OECD. The European Parliament, going further than moral support, has made a special pilot project budget available for the past two years, so that promoting EU regional policy on a global scale would not be a burden on the ERDF. We use it to arrange conferences, seminars and study visits, which can include the OPEN DAYS.

Secondly, Europe can benefit from the experience of others and we always prefer dialogue to imposing ready-made solutions. Non-EU countries which wish to work with DG REGIO must undertake to participate fully in a dialogue and contribute meaningfully to the discussion.

Thirdly, such exchanges of experience can promote the EU's external relations, as they are a particularly useful contribution to economic development and cross-border cooperation objectives. This means they are a good way to encourage genuinely closer relationships with countries in the European Union's Neighbourhood such as Eastern Partnership members Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Who's on board?

Since 2006 the EU has signed formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on regional policy dialogue with China, Russia, Brazil and Ukraine. The DG has also developed contacts with a number of other countries such as South Africa and members of the Eastern Partnership, as well as with regional associations in the rest of the world like MERCOSUR, UEMOA and ASEAN.

The OPEN DAYS event plays a significant part in developing these contacts. MoU countries are required to hold annual high-level seminars, and OPEN DAYS week is an ideal time to do it.

Speakers and participants from the non-EU countries we are working with can be brought to Brussels thanks to the European Parliament pilot project, often in the context of a more wide-ranging study visit to other EU regions. The 'international' element of the OPEN DAYS has grown from just two high-level seminars in one day in 2006 to a series of eight 'official' international seminars and several more elsewhere in the programme dealing with cross-border cooperation issues.

This growth in interest demonstrates that OPEN DAYS is becoming a forum for dialogue on regional policy with a truly international flavour. In 2010 we know we will have Russian, Brazilian and Ukrainian participants (the seminar with China will be at the Shanghai expo this year). And we fully expect Indian, Japanese, Armenian, Georgian, Moldovan, South and West African visitors too.

In fact there are no restrictions. Participants can, and do, come from anywhere. Many cooperation links are forged at the OPEN DAYS which give rise to projects and exchanges of experience across borders all over the world.



In 2009 the brochure 'European Regional Policy, an inspiration for Countries outside the EU?' was published, giving an overview of European regional policy and exploring how the EU's experience can be shared with regions outside the EU.

The brochure is available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Russian and Ukrainian.

FIND OUT MORE :

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/international/index_en.htm

Sharing knowledge in the global village: Brazil

Cooperation with Brazil, where European regional policy experience is highly respected and already influences policy, has been very intense and successful. Brazil and the European Union face many similar challenges in the process of integration. Today, these take on many forms, reflecting differing economic assets plus differences in the geographical impact of global competition, climate change, the pattern of energy dependency and changing demographics.

Brazil, with a population of 190 million and twice the land area of the EU, faces wide regional development disparities between the North and the more developed South, as well as cross-border cooperation issues. Reducing regional inequalities and boosting 'home-grown' development in each region are the main objectives of the Brazilian National Policy for Regional Development, which was formalised in February 2007.

Against this background, in November 2007 the Brazilian Minister for National Integration, Geddel Vieira Lima, and the European Commissioner for regional policy, Danuta Hübner, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), designed to establish a structured dialogue on regional policy. It has enhanced mutual understanding and promoted bilateral cooperation, which has in turn opened up new channels of communication.

In 2008, a cooperation programme (2009-11) was agreed with a number of measures in two main fields:

- The exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practice. This includes preparing policy-makers and staff at different government levels for the challenge of implementing regional policies.

- Technical support to strengthen strategic capacity, monitoring and evaluation practices in integrated regional plans and programmes. Also to support the implementation of pilot projects on the Brazil-French Guiana border.

What's been done so far?

Seven high-level seminars and conferences have taken place in Brazil and the EU since then, as well as three training programmes in Brazil and eight study visits to the EU, plus a number of exchanges and technical missions, to see first-hand how regional policy is implemented.

Brazilian representatives have participated on a regular basis in OPEN DAYS (including in 2007 a large Exhibition called 'Expo-regions') and the Regional Development Exhibitions ('Mostras') organised by the Brazilian authorities in March 2009 (Salvador de Bahia) and March 2010 (Florianopolis). The 'Mostra', which was largely inspired by OPEN DAYS, brought together national and regional institutions and authorities, EU representatives, representatives of business, cooperatives, academics, and major service and infrastructure providers for a series of presentations, discussions and exchanges of experience on regional development themes.

In 2009, the dialogue moved up a gear, with regions from both sides being directly involved. In particular, a programme exchange for representatives of five Brazilian 'meso-regions' (priority regions in Brazilian policy-making) was organised in October 2009 for visits to European regions to see and discuss how regional policy is defined and implemented. The exchange showed how cooperation between regions can boost economic development and how the diversification of urban and rural economies can lead to higher overall growth.



Danuta Hübner and Geddel Vieira Lima, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

INTERVIEW WITH COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS PRESIDENT



Mercedes Bresso speaks to Panorama

The new President of the Committee of the Regions, Mercedes Bresso, gives Panorama an insight into OPEN DAYS.

What was the original motivation for launching the OPEN DAYS in 2003?

The first year, OPEN DAYS literally meant 'open days' at 10 or so regional offices in Brussels, providing an opportunity to discuss European issues with regional

staff. The regional offices based in Brussels have remained the driving force behind OPEN DAYS. They share a large part of the workload and contribute significantly to the success of the event. The Committee of the Regions, meanwhile, plays the role of facilitator between regions and cities and European decision-makers.

What have been the OPEN DAYS' most important achievements so far and what can we expect in 2010?

OPEN DAYS is now a permanent annual event in the European regional policy calendar. Events take place in Brussels and all over Europe, where several hundred local events are organised every year. It offers a fantastic large-scale networking opportunity. One of the main objectives of the Committee of the Regions is to give voice and visibility to regional and local concerns at the European level.

OPEN DAYS 2010 will be a showcase for Europe's regions, a chance to show that they matter when it comes to making the economy more competitive, greener and more inclusive. Regional presidents, ministers and mayors will be able to use the events to get their voice heard in Brussels. With all the EU institutions on board as partners in the event, they can be sure that they will be listened to. What better way for the regions to influence future tough negotiations on the EU budget, especially on ERDF-funded measures.

Is there anything you are particularly proud of?

Year after year, many participants come long distances to join us for OPEN DAYS. They invest time and money because they see that it is worth the effort. We are equally proud of the well-established cooperation between the Committee of the Regions and DG REGIO; a great example of inter-institutional partnership. The close cooperation with the regional offices also shows that Europe is built by its people working together.

The European Commission plans to adopt the 5th Cohesion Report in November 2010. What do you hope it will say about the future cohesion policy post-2013?

Cohesion policy after 2013 must remain true to its principles and efficient enough to give lasting value for money. The greatest need will be to create a cohesion policy that is accessible to anyone wishing to carry out a project, be it public or private. This will require radical simplification to cut out bureaucratic texts and procedures.

Cohesion policy is the only European policy that is tailored to the development needs of regions. In the wake of economic crisis, we need it all the more. It embodies the European social model, offering opportunities to European citizens wherever they live and it must carry on responding to the challenges. We believe that it has to remain a European policy that promotes territorial cooperation. All attempts to renationalise it, or reduce its scope to only certain regions, must be resisted.

If you had to sum up the benefits of attending the OPEN DAYS in a nutshell, what would you say?

OPEN DAYS puts regional staff and participants at the heart of regional policy debates. There is no substitute for having a presence on the ground. Participants can meet and discuss with regional policy experts from all over Europe – civil servants, private companies, experts from financial institutions, academics and journalists. In short: it's the place to be for everyone involved at a regional or local level.

VISIT US

Spotlight on some projects presented during the OPEN DAYS

This year, a variety of projects co-financed by European cohesion policy will be showcased in the regions, in workshops and on the premises of the Directorate-General for regional policy.

Developing the information society, accelerating the transfer of know-how, supporting investment in people, stimulating cross-border cooperation and co-financing infrastructure projects – all these activities help regions achieve a faster rate of economic development in a sustainable way.

Come and join us at the networking lunches, OPEN DAYS registration tent and OPEN DAYS stage to learn more about ERDF co-funded projects!

Networking lunches

12 projects will be presented during three networking lunches:

Tuesday 5 October, 13:15 – 14:15 (CSM2 building):

‘MEET THE PROJECTS – HOW EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY CONTRIBUTES TO THE GREEN ECONOMY’

Speakers include:

- Walter Freudenthaler, Green Building Cluster of Lower Austria
- Chris Ashe, Build with Care, INTERREG IVB North Sea Programme (2007-13), Region Västra Götaland
- Professor Phil Jones, Head of Cardiff University's Welsh School of Architecture and Chair of the Low Carbon Research Institute (LCRI), Low Carbon Research Institute Energy Programme
- Adwin Martens, Project Leader, Region of Hydrogen Economy, Flanders (BELGIUM)

Tuesday 5 October, 13:15 – 14:15 (CSM1 building):

‘MEET THE PROJECTS – INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY’

Speakers include:

- Heikki Immonen, Innovation Coordinator, ACE – Advanced Collaboration for Entrepreneurship Project, TULI Programme (FINLAND)
- Doctor Päivi Iskanius, Project Manager, Northern Research and Innovation Platform, University of Oulu (FINLAND)
- Ms Alie Tigchelhoff, Director, Utrecht Science Park (NETHERLANDS)
- Helen Armstrong, One North East, European Regions for Innovative Productivity, North Sea INTERREG

OPEN DAYS registration tent

Many other projects will be presented through leaflets and videos in the OPEN DAYS registration tent in front of the CSM2 building from 4 to 7 October.

OPEN DAYS stage

The OPEN DAYS stage, as was the case last year, will be set up in front of the main entrance of the Berlaymont building. Some regions will present projects through music, dance performances and theatre. These performances will take place between 12:30 and 14:30 on 5 and 6 October.

HOW TO FIND US

The regional policy buildings are located on Avenue de Tervueren 41, 1040 Brussels.

Easily accessible by public transport:

Merode Metro station – Exit 'Prince Jean de Merode'.

Wednesday 6 October, 13:15 – 14:15 (CSM2 building):

‘MEET THE PROJECTS – USING ICT IN CROSS-BORDER PROJECTS’

Speakers include:

- Matthias Wevelsiep, Central Baltic Programme – IleP (Immigrant Inclusion by eParticipation)
- Kristiāns Godiņš, Head of Kurzeme Planning Region Administration, Enhancement of Lifelong Learning Cross-Border Capacity, Latvia-Lithuania Programme
- Alberto Preti, KASSETS: Knowledge-enabled Access of Central Europe SMEs to Efficient Transnational Transport Solutions
- Paola Baravalle, Promo Terroir, Programme Alcotra 2007-13 – Région PACA & Regione Piemonte



OPEN DAYS 2009, concert in front of the Berlaymont building

A LOOK BACK AT HOW IT ALL STARTED

Great oaks from little acorns

An award-winning forum for workshops, seminars and networking opportunities for anyone interested in regional policy or involved in boosting and improving their regions – that’s OPEN DAYS.

When it first started in 2003, OPEN DAYS was a small affair. With only 16 seminars and 10 participating cities and regions, no one imagined that within a few years, OPEN DAYS would become the largest event in the regional policy calendar in Europe. Participants at OPEN DAYS in 2003 weren't actually registering for a specific workshop or seminar but rather walking through OPEN DOORS, seeing what the regional offices and the CoR did on a daily basis.

How did it all start?

In its current format, OPEN DAYS was actually born in Sète, France in 2003. During a late summer evening dinner, colleagues from the CoR and DG Regio mulled over how to make the OPEN DAYS experience even more successful.

One idea was to do a Summer School with seminars on specific themes. Another was to expand OPEN DAYS set up by the regional offices earlier that year, but on a much smaller scale. So why not combine the two? Regional offices in Brussels would continue to open their doors once a year but through a structured format of seminars and workshops on the basis of a few selected themes. Brilliant!

A complex event to organise

No sooner is one year’s event over than the next starts to be planned. Once the evaluations have been analysed, the different teams from the CoR, DG Regio and the partner regions and cities sit down to discuss how to make the next event even better!

Who does what?

Within the CoR, there are three members of staff who work all year round on preparing the programme, while in DG Regio, there is one full-time staff member who works all year round on the European Commission's contribution. This work involves inviting different Directorates-General and Agencies to participate and making sure that all venues are equipped with the right support, including the necessary interpretation.

For the participating regional partnerships, the work is no less complicated. With regional partnerships often comprising seven or more regions or cities, agreement needs to be reached on not only the titles of the workshops or the venues, but also who will speak in each workshop.

So when the first week of October arrives...

More than 6 000 participants from across Europe and beyond descend on Brussels and the fun really begins! Visiting local and regional politicians are accompanied to different workshops and meetings around Brussels, journalists want to interview their local or regional politician, and most people are just trying to find their next workshop venue!

You are part of what makes OPEN DAYS such an important event and we look forward to welcoming you.

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Partner regions+cities	10	67	106	135	212	216	213	245
Regional partnerships	-	11	16	14	24	22	24	28
Number of seminars	16	64	66	135	150	145	122	130
Number of venues	10	12	24	37	44	35	26	31
Individual participants	1 200	2 000	2 500	4 000	5 500	7 400	6 046	6 000*
Journalists			70	122	240	275	331	300*
Stands Investors' Café/Meeting Place				110	160	150	none	59
Local events in regions				50	95	220	233	260

* expectation

OPEN DAYS 'FOUNDING FATHERS'

Who thought it all up?

Panorama talked to the 'founding fathers' of OPEN DAYS – Charles White, international relations officer at the communication unit of DG Regio, Laurent Thieule, director of communication with the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and Wolfgang Petzold, now head of the events unit at the CoR.

How did the idea for the OPEN DAYS come about?

W.P.: When I began to work for DG Regio, I came from an ERDF managing authority. To me, it was clear that implementing the funds is a communication issue of European scale and I had a concept in the drawer for a 'summer school' for fund managers. When we met with colleagues from the CoR, they had detected a communication need among regional offices which have to organise two-way communication between Brussels and the regions. The CoR had initiated an 'open day' of regional offices in 2003, and they had discovered that there was huge interest. The next year, we held the first event jointly organised by DG Regio and the CoR.

What makes the event so successful?

L.T.: We created a communication platform linking EU officials with the regions implementing the policies. It is a win-win situation: decision-makers can look at practical examples of how their policies are implemented while the regions get an opportunity to showcase good practice.

Another reason for the success is that the event constantly evolves. When we launched the local events, the 'OPEN DAYS

University', or when we decided to invite private companies, we were feeding the event with new ideas.

C.W.: It is a very important element that people know they are going to hear from practitioners. There was a big demand from the Eastern European countries that were joining, but it was matched by a demand from people from the 'old' Member States who wanted to learn more about how their counterparts worked. There is also quite a percentage of non-Europeans who want to understand how cohesion policy works.

What was the idea behind the combination of the OPEN DAYS in Brussels and local events across the EU?

C.W.: We made the organisation of local events a condition of taking part to show that cohesion policy is dynamically created from the local side. They are one of the big successes; in the first few years, the expansion was amazing.

W.P.: If you organise an event in Brussels, you remain inside this community of EU officials. But as cohesion policy is something that happens 'at home', it was only logical to add a local element to the event. This was partly influenced by the debate about 'going local', a debate among those 'communicating Europe'. A number of big EU events have 'gone local' in the meantime.

How would you sum up the main achievements?

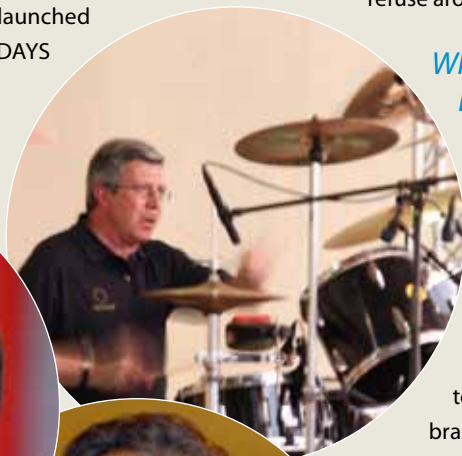
L.T.: It is a political demonstration of the power of the regions, a remarkable example of inter-institutional cooperation between DG REGIO and the CoR, and a huge success in terms of participation: we set a ceiling of around 6 000 participants and have to refuse around 2 000 more every year.

What are your expectations for future OPEN DAYS?

C.W.: We will keep it more closely tied to policy changes, like the Europe 2020 Strategy. I would like to see successful OPEN DAYS before the budget decision for the next programming period is taken to demonstrate what an important activity cohesion policy is.

L.T.: A reflection for the future of European communication might be to shift institutional communication to brand communication. The OPEN DAYS are a European brand that stands for an EU policy successfully implemented at local level.

W.P.: I would like to see the event become even more 'open' – less traditional seminars and more 'open space' communication instead, where people can meet and put forward ideas or questions. Less 'top down', more creativity and networking.



BOOSTING REGIONAL POLICY'S PROFILE IN CASTILLA Y LEÓN, SPAIN

Building on the positive reaction to OPEN DAYS events in the past two years, the Castilla y León region is taking its boldest stance so far to show how EU programmes can bring economic growth without cutting across Spanish identity and culture. Youth employment and independence are under the spotlight this year, specifically to show how EU measures can bring training, new employment prospects and a new level of independent living.

In Castilla y León, local events linked with the OPEN DAYS in Brussels are an established part of the calendar. Now youth employment and empowerment are the focus, in a region where young people often remain with their parents until well into adulthood and may have limited employment prospects. EU intervention in youth training and employment initiatives can help turn this situation around, so the local link with Brussels OPEN DAYS is a chance to bring this information to the doorstep of those who need it.

Employment and independence go hand in hand

The region is staging a special youth employment event aimed particularly at those in rural areas. There will be a dual message to young people that they can be economically independent and forge their own identity beyond their family home. The event is making use of the strong links with the regional administration in central Portugal and speakers from both regions will be giving first-hand advice to organisations that work directly with young people.

A new Spanish approach

Discussion and debate will look first at how EU policy in the areas of employment and training are relevant to the young. The presentations will centre specifically on measures that have been developed in Spain and how these provide a basis for new employment and training. At the same time, participants will consider the importance of independent living and how employment prospects can also allow young adults to live away from their parents, especially through subsidised housing. The two themes will be used together to build an achievable vision for young people that is still in keeping with Spanish culture and lifestyles. It's a bold step, showing local people how EU measures can be viewed in very parochial terms.

A quick look back at the growing success of these events over the last two years reveals why this year's event can be so bold.

2009 – THE URGENCY OF COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

A regional conference on the theme of environmental protection and climate change was a sellout. Municipal authorities, local businesses and NGOs filled the conference venue to hear speakers from their own Castilla y León region, North West UK, Denmark and the European Commission explaining how EU measures are active in promoting environmental gains.

Alongside this event, the Castilla Foundation for the Environment drew on its contacts with schools to stage a kids' workshop teaching the key concepts of climate change. The children taking part left with a vision for changing the way they live rather than changing their environment. Who is to say which of these two events was the more hard-hitting? EU initiatives can help children to grow up with a different outlook to their parents' generation.

2008 – THE SOUND PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

In the first year when Castilla y León organised local events to tie in with Brussels OPEN DAYS, the theme was sustainable energy. A growing commitment to wind power in the region was the catalyst for presenting EU policies in a region-specific way. Companies and organisations developing technology in this field heard directly from the European Commission how the Framework Directive on Renewable Energy could affect and benefit them and also how European legislation would have an impact in Spain.



VISIBLE BENEFITS FROM THE BALTIC-ADRIATIC RAIL LINK IN TRENČÍN, SLOVAKIA

In the Trenčín region, the Baltic-Adriatic rail link is the local focus for Brussels OPEN DAYS events this year. A prime example of a macro region, there is huge commercial potential in completing the rail link from Gdansk, on the Baltic, to the Adriatic coast. So the region is aiming high and organising a workshop bringing together commercial and public interests to debate the details of how this vast project can be achieved.

Uninterrupted transport links in the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor could bring a completely new commercial viability to the whole of this region. A recent European Commission conference in Zaragoza, Spain highlighted the impact on growth of developing North-South transport axes, so the Brussels Office for the Trenčín region is keen to bring this message closer to home.

The power of TEN-T

Strategic planning by the European TEN-T network and established cooperation between the five countries along the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor has resulted in this massive rail route becoming a TEN-T Priority Project. Each country is upgrading key links in the chain, including the Gdansk land bridge, new electrification in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the Koralm tunnel in Austria. EU co-funding through the ERDF and ongoing partnerships between all the commercial and political interests in each country will be the key to delivering the vision.

At the workshop on 6 October in Brussels organised by the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor regions, speakers from the regional administrations in Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Austria and Italy will join their counterparts in Brussels to explain the cooperation between 19 regions to deliver a first-class rail transport infrastructure. All will be focusing on the benefits of cross-border and transnational cooperation and the impact thus far.

Bringing the message home

The same message will then be transferred to a local audience of private and public business interests in Trenčín, using examples of cross-border cooperation in transport policy to demonstrate the benefits of macro regions. At this crucial point in the Priority Project, people in Trenčín will be able to catch the same vision on a more local level. They will have first-hand information on the benefits from new economic growth, including better access for goods and services travelling from the East and Asia, and the wider benefits of more sustainable transport and improved safety.

OPEN DAYS 2009 – THE CARING FACE OF THE EU

Last year, people living in Trenčín had direct contact with professionals in social care who actively took part in the OPEN DAYS 2009 in Brussels and heard how their interests and views were being put across to the European institutions. Local events were organised jointly by the Europe Direct office based in Trenčín and representatives from Brussels on the theme of social care. Many different organisations took part to learn more about experiences from different EU regions in this area and how social services in Trenčín were embracing change and developing best practices.

Bringing key Brussels staff to Trenčín and raising the profile of Europe Direct allowed local people to see the impact of the EU at first hand. EU membership acquired a more human dimension through the tangible example of social care and this paved the way for other aspects of European policy to be brought closer to home. In practical terms too, companies and organisations know where to go for help in applying for EU funding and widening their network of contacts.



VESNA CAMINADES

Vesna Caminades has been director of the Brussels office of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, South Tyrol, since 2005.

What will be the topic of the seminar that the Office of the European Region Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino is planning to organise during the 2010 OPEN DAYS?



We have chosen the topic of territorial cooperation, and, more precisely, the issue of the macro regions. As alpine regions, the possibility to establish macro regions is interesting for us. Some of them have already been established, others are in the process of being set up.

Considering that the situation of the alpine macro region is currently uncertain, we would like to present a 'state-of-the-art' alpine strategy and European policy in this regard.

The Office has participated in the OPEN DAYS in previous years already. How would you sum up the mutual benefits derived from your participation?

This is the fifth time that we will be participating. The main added value of the OPEN DAYS is the opportunity it provides for networking, as well as in terms of media impact. The OPEN DAYS are really a good instrument to gather a lot of participants in one place to discuss one issue. We will use the media support that DG Regional Policy and the Committee of the Regions are offering during the OPEN DAYS.

What are the particular challenges for cohesion policy in your region? How can the region as a whole benefit from the OPEN DAYS?

We are a liaison office that has been established by three partner regions: the Austrian Land of Tyrol and the two Italian Autonomous Provinces of Trentino and South Tyrol. So for us, being able to organise the OPEN DAYS among the three of us together with other interested partner regions is an

important step. The second step then of course is the networking among alpine regions: for us, it is really important that we can organise a kick-off for initiatives that we really believe in. This year's participation will be a first step towards the alpine macro region.

On the eve of the debate about the reform of cohesion policy after 2013, is there a message that you would like to put across based on the experience gathered in your region?

We hope of course that the funds we are eligible for will continue to exist! On a higher level, I would welcome it if the principles that Mr Barca has set out in his report published last year would be taken into account, i.e. to have a place-based strategy. And above all, to have a cohesion policy that aims at promoting innovative and competitive regions. In my opinion, the aim of cohesion policy should be to help regions to improve, not only to try to fulfil certain criteria to become eligible for funds. Competitiveness is a relative notion, for each region this can represent another aim. For South Tyrol, for example, the challenge for the upcoming period is to establish a European grouping for territorial cooperation with Tyrol and Trentino.

What are your expectations for OPEN DAYS in the coming years?

I think it might a good thing to open the event up more to other countries, to allow for comparisons with either countries in Asia or the United States – to open Europe up to the comparison with other realities. That would be quite interesting. Also, there could be more communication to the citizens. Another point that could be optimised is that there is some competition between the seminars organised by the Commission and the Committee of the Regions and those organised by the regions and cities in Brussels. But there is always space for synergies, and the OPEN DAYS are improving year by year.

ALESSANDRO BARBERIS

Alessandro Barberis is President of EUROCHAMBRES, the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry

What form will your participation in this year's OPEN DAYS take?

As official partner of the OPEN DAYS event, EUROCHAMBRES contributes to the 'Meeting Place' via the AlpMed Chambers network. A workshop on the role of Chambers in the economic development of euro regions is scheduled for 6 October. Successful territorial cooperation projects will be displayed in the exhibition area.

Could you give some examples of activities that EUROCHAMBRES has organised for OPEN DAYS in previous years?

EUROCHAMBRES has organised workshops in cooperation with the Chambers network, gathering regional public authorities and Chambers as well as presenting its activities in the 'Investors' Café'. We contributed with the publication of a regional competitiveness atlas, which offered readers a snapshot of where European regions stand in terms of economic development. Last year we presented the 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs' scheme, which EUROCHAMBRES is coordinating on behalf of the European Commission.

EUROCHAMBRES is a regular participant in the Brussels OPEN DAYS. What role does the event play for your work? How does it help to further your objectives?

Chambers have strong regional and local roots, and regional economic development is one of their key priorities. Thanks to its network of 2 000 local and regional Chambers, EUROCHAMBRES represents over 20 million businesses of all sectors and sizes. It is therefore crucial that we provide the business perspective.

Generally speaking, how can EUROCHAMBRES contribute to the objectives of cohesion policy? What is the role of events such as the OPEN DAYS in this regard?

Chambers are valuable partners at local and regional level when it comes to defining cohesion policy objectives and implementing related measures. They are ideally placed to foster the business agenda so that businesses, their members, can benefit from a more business-friendly environment and open the doors to enhanced economic growth.

The OPEN DAYS offer regional stakeholders a very interesting platform for exchanging best practices and ideas. As participants from all over Europe take part, new links are created and partnerships initiated.

What are your expectations for future cohesion policy action after 2013?

Economic, social and territorial cohesion are three of Europe's principal objectives that cannot be attained without the active contribution of the economy. The challenge is therefore to foster economic, social and territorial cohesion among European regions while enhancing their competitiveness.

Businesses are key wealth creators at regional level and therefore crucial to generate sustainable economic growth.

Europe's businesses need favourable framework conditions to compete on the internal and global markets. Cohesion policy must contribute to creating these framework conditions, besides pursuing the overall objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Are there any concerns close to the heart of EUROCHAMBRES which you would like to receive more attention in the framework of future OPEN DAYS events?

EUROCHAMBRES is gravely concerned about the willingness of national governments to commit to the reforms necessary to ensure Europe's growth and competitiveness. Ensuring this commitment is pivotal to the success of the new Europe 2020 Strategy, yet the signs are that this has not been adequately addressed. OPEN DAYS should provide an opportunity to reflect among stakeholders from the regional level about how they can help fill this vacuum.



HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY?

1

WHAT FUNDS MAKE UP EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY?

- a) The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF)
- b) Only the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- c) The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund and European Social Fund (ESF)
- d) The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP) and European Social Fund (ESF)

2

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY IN THE 2007-13 PROGRAMMING PERIOD IS BEING SPENT ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION?

- a) 15%
- b) 25%
- c) 40%
- d) 55%

3

HOW MANY KM OF NEW OR REDEVELOPED ROADS DID EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY CO-FINANCE IN THE 2000-06 PERIOD?

- a) Almost 100 000 km
- b) Almost 150 000 km
- c) Almost 200 000 km
- d) Almost 250 000 km

4

WHICH STATEMENT IS CORRECT?

- a) 1 in 20 regions has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant below 75% of the average for the European Union of 27.
- b) 1 in 10 regions has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant below 75% of the average for the European Union of 27.
- c) 1 in 7 regions has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant below 75% of the average for the European Union of 27.
- d) 1 in 4 regions has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant below 75% of the average for the European Union of 27.

5

HOW MANY EUROPEAN REGIONS ARE THERE?

- a) 194
- b) 236
- c) 271
- d) 317

6

WHAT ARE THE REGIOSTARS?

- a) Ambassadors of cohesion policy
- b) The most innovative regional projects in the EU
- c) A regional network (Strategic Alliance for Regional Sustainability)
- d) A teaching project financed by European cohesion policy in schools

7

DO YOU KNOW WHAT EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY IS ALL ABOUT?

- a) Investing in the economies of Europe's regions
- b) Supporting green growth
- c) Promoting cooperation across Europe's regions and Member States
- d) All of the above

POSTER COMPETITION SHOWS OFF YOUNG RESEARCHERS' WORK

For early-career researchers in the area of European regional policy, OPEN DAYS 2010 not only represents an exciting opportunity to present their research – they might even win a prize! For the first time, the European Commission's Directorate-General for regional policy and the Regional Studies Association are organising a competition, inviting early-career researchers to outline their research on regional policy. The overall winner and the first runner-up will be announced during the OPEN DAYS and will receive €750 and €250 respectively.

The competition has been divided into two stages. In the first stage, applicants – who must either have been completing a PhD or have completed a PhD within the previous three years – were invited to submit a 1000-word abstract of their research and a current CV. The jury then shortlisted six finalists who will attend the OPEN DAYS in order to showcase their research via a poster they have to develop especially for the occasion.

During the OPEN DAYS, the finalists are also expected to answer questions on their poster from jury members, who include: Dr Ronald Hall, Director at DG Regional Policy; Dr Ilona Pálné-Kovács, Director of the Centre for Regional Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; and Professor Andy Pike from the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies at Newcastle University.

The jury will pay particular attention to the organisation, content and aim of the poster, its visual impact, and the quality of the answers provided. Candidates should seek to present their research in an informative, readily understandable manner, and their contribution should aim to pose pertinent questions and to advance knowledge and understanding.

The poster competition is part of the successful OPEN DAYS University, which brings together researchers in the field of regional policy, thereby adding an academic flavour to the OPEN DAYS.

FIND OUT MORE

<http://www.opendays.europa.eu>



'HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY?' QUIZ – ANSWERS

1. Correct answer: d) The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund and European Social Fund (ESF)
2. Correct answer: b) 25%
3. Correct answer: a) Almost 100 000 km
4. Correct answer: d) 1 in 4 regions has a GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per inhabitant below 75% of the average for the European Union of 27.
5. Correct answer: c) 271
6. Correct answer: b) The most innovative regional projects in the EU
7. Correct answer: d) All of the above

Dig deeper, learn more

Did you come away from the OPEN DAYS
with an issue uppermost in your mind?

We would be glad to have your feedback and comments.

Please let us know how you think the event went, and also any
other ideas that might have occurred to you, by either filling out
the evaluation form or e-mailing us:

regio-info@ec.europa.eu

You can also join our online community platform – RegioNetwork 2020.
Launched during the OPEN DAYS, this new information service will give
you the chance to share news and information, find partners
and generally touch base on the aspects of regional policy
most relevant to you.

Here's where to find it:

**[https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/
regionetwork2020](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regionetwork2020)**

We look forward to hearing from you!

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