

Maximising the Opportunities for Cohesion Policy in Challenging Times: An Academic and Policy Debate

Third Joint EU Cohesion Policy Conference

11th-13th May 2020, Zagreb, Croatia

Jointly organised by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, RSA Europe, and the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Abstract submission deadline 22nd February 2020

The presentation of the proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2021 to 2027 and the subsequent package for proposals for the regulations of the Funds by the European Commission in May 2018 kicked off the legislative process for the new Cohesion Policy after 2020. The Commission proposals seek to strike a delicate balance between continuity and the need for reform. They have been designed to increase the focus of Cohesion Policy on a 'smarter' and 'greener' Europe and create favourable conditions for investment, but with simplified delivery mechanisms and closer links to structural reforms.

The European Union is committed to becoming the first climate-neutral bloc in the world by 2050. A Just Transition Fund will be established within the framework of cohesion policy, to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no people, no region behind.

Against this background, the Third Joint EU Cohesion Policy Conference - organised by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and RSA Europe together with the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union - aims to take stock of the challenges and opportunities for Cohesion Policy. The timing of the Conference will allow critical assessment of research evidence and policy thinking on how cities and regions could best determine their strategic funding priorities for the next programming period, in order to address development needs and opportunities effectively with the support of the Funds and in synergy with other EU instruments.

The Conference will bring together a limited number of participants from academia, the European Institutions and Member State authorities to debate where Cohesion Policy is going, the evidence for its performance to date, and how its contribution to sustainable growth and jobs can be maximised.

Papers are invited on the following questions and themes which will form the basis for workshop sessions, panel debates and discussion groups at the Conference.

1. **Facing the megatrends:** how can Cohesion Policy adapt to current global megatrends such as digitalisation, automation, demographic change or climate change? Is Cohesion Policy flexible enough to address global changes in a timely manner?
2. **A policy that invests in all regions and cities:** what is the research evidence on effective use of Cohesion Policy resources to support job creation, business competitiveness, economic growth, sustainable development, and improve citizens'

quality of life in all territories of the EU (i.e. low income and low growth regions, cross border regions, regions in industrial transition, urban and rural areas)?

3. **Performance and results:** how can evaluation and monitoring reports and results be best used to improve performance and results in a rapidly changing environment? Can Cohesion Policy resources be used more efficiently and effectively?
4. **Policy objectives:** what do we know about 'good practice' in programming the new policy objectives for 2021-27 (Smarter, Greener, more Connected and more Social Europe)? How can we deliver optimal benefit for the people of the regions taking into account different challenges across Europe? What are the best practices?
5. **Policy synergies:** how can stronger linkages between Cohesion Policy and other policies/instruments be created?
6. **Institutions and governance:** what can Cohesion Policy do to strengthen public administration and the effective management of the Funds? And what are the implications of greater linkages between Cohesion Policy and the European Semester?
7. **Financial Instruments:** when and where do they work best under Cohesion Policy? And how can their take-up be made more attractive?
8. **A Europe closer to citizens:** what are the lessons of integrated local development instruments to date? How can Cohesion Policy be best communicated? What works for involving citizens in Cohesion Policy?

Submission of papers

Please submit proposals for papers in the form of a 500-word abstract through the online portal by 22nd February 2020. Given the purpose and audience of the conference, the abstracts should be accessible to a wider audience and draw out policy implications or lessons insofar as possible. The organisers particularly welcome submission from Croatian researchers and policy practitioners.

Proposers will be notified of the selected papers by 8th March 2020, with the expectation of a full paper being submitted by 1st May 2020.

Conference organisation

It should be noted that the organisation of the conference is being jointly managed and funded by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, RSA Europe and the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. There is no charge to attend this conference, however the number of participants is limited, and travel and accommodation must be covered by participants.

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