



Local & Regional  
Europe



When citizens meet cohesion policy

# 10 takeaways from our 'local and regional dialogues'

IT'S ABOUT THE  
**FUTURE  
OF EUROPE**  
*Let's talk*



#EUdialogues

#FutureOfEurope

## INTRODUCTION

So many investments made in our towns and regions have only been made possible thanks to cohesion policy: the European Union's investment policy for 'overall harmonious development' in Europe. Thanks to this European impulse, residents, businesses, universities and local governments can benefit from investments in sectors that are essential for our daily lives: transport, innovation, jobs and much more. But do citizens feel cohesion policy's added value?

To answer this question, 60 'local and regional dialogues' are taking place all over Europe to discuss the value of cohesion policy in our towns and regions. 30 dialogues have already taken place. Discover their 10 main takeaways below:

## 10 TAKEAWAYS

1. **Citizens are becoming more aware** of opportunities available to them. The dialogues provide information to citizens on the opportunities cohesion funds provide (e.g. funds accessible for young entrepreneurs, for professional trainings or for social purposes).
2. Projects present the **positive impact of cohesion policy** at local and regional level. Citizens are surprised about the details and the effects of the projects, ranging from urban revitalisation, support to SMEs, research and innovation, social integration etc.
3. Citizens, civil society organisations and businesses want to **exchange more on what the EU finances** in their municipality or region. There are lively debates on what the future investment priorities should be in the region or city (urban vs rural; one single priority vs a diversified portfolio of priorities)
4. Communication around cohesion policy could be **co-created with citizens** and associations in order to ensure its positive impact. For instance, a proposal was made to link the funding of projects to additional budget lines for project promotion.
5. **National associations** of local and regional governments can play a key multiplier effect to show results of cohesion policy. The dialogues gather together many students, civil society organizations, local representatives and EU officials. Participants feel supported in having a platform to address their concerns on investment priorities in their regions.
6. Regional and local views should be better taken into account when **defining investment priorities** at local level. EU projects should be aligned to towns' strategies and offer added value to the town's strategic planning.

## LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

7. Cohesion policy creates **solidarity among countries, regions and people**. Especially for the youngest. Many projects show that cohesion policy creates solidarity over borders, mobilising local and regional players around common European challenges, across borders. It also brings the public and private sectors to work and learn together.
8. The EU, with the Member States and Regions, should invest more in **citizen awareness-raising**. Information on EU-funded projects towards citizens is missing.

9. Cohesion policy is an investment policy creating **innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth** in Europe. Private companies accessing structural funds showed they could not have succeeded in developing their businesses without them.
10. Cohesion funds remain important for **all regions**, in both more and less advantaged areas. Examples show that EU cohesion policy creates innovation, competitiveness and sustainable growth in Europe by supporting common goals at European level that could not be achieved via national resources alone. In the area of research and innovations for instance, it supports both concrete market applications as well as long-term investment research.

These dialogues are organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (**CEMR**) and its project partners, with the support of the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (**DG REGIO**).

## PROJECT PARTNERS

Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region (**Brulocalis**, Belgium)

Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (**VVSG**, Belgium)

CEMR's Italian section (**AICCRE**, Italy)

Association of Netherlands Municipalities (**VNG**, The Netherlands)

Bürgerforum Europa (**Bürgerforum**, Austria)

CEMR's French section (**AFCCRE**, France)

Danish Regions (**Regioner**, Denmark)

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (**SALAR**, Sweden)

Union of Cities and Municipalities of Wallonia (**UVCW**, Belgium)

Collaboration with CEMR's German section (**RGRE**, Germany).

## WHERE HAVE LOCAL AND REGIONAL DIALOGUES TAKEN PLACE?

From November 2017 to May 2018

Austria	Belgium	Denmark	France	Italy	Netherlands	Sweden
Bregenz	Courriere	Aalborg	Orléans	Ancona	The Hague	Gävle
Eisenstadt	Turnhout	Aarhus	Romainville	Carini		Goteborg
Graz		Kolding		Monselice		Malmö
Klagenfurt				Pescara		Norrköping
Krems				Perugia		Skellefteå
Vienna				Salerno		Stockholm
				Turin		Sundsvall
				Udine		Vajxo