

HOW CAN THE COHESION POLICY BE USED TO FINANCE PROJECTS IN THE MOUNTAINS?

ARAGON REGION – SPAIN

WHAT IS IT?

The Cohesion Policy is the European Union's largest investment policy. It offers funding to reduce socio-economic and territorial disparities across the European Member States and regions. In article 174 of the European Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, this policy recognises that particular attention has to be paid to mountain areas.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES?

Over the 2021–2027 period, the Cohesion Policy will deliver on five objectives:



Smarter Europe

innovation, digitalisation, economic transformation and support to SMEs



Greener Europe

carbon-free, green energy, climate change adaptation



More connected Europe

strategic transport, digital networks, connectivity



More Social Europe

quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare



Europe closer to citizens

locally-led strategy, sustainable urban and rural development

HOW MUCH DOES IT AMOUNT TO?

In total, €392 billion – almost a third of the total EU budget – has been set aside for the Cohesion Policy over the 2021–2027 period. Funds are channelled through four main funds:

- 1 The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- 2 The Cohesion Fund (CF)
- 3 The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)
- 4 The Just Transition Fund (JTF)



The European Union has launched Next Generation EU, a programme to support recovery with an additional €776.5 billion through the Cohesion Policy over the 2021–2027 period.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Every 7 years, the European Union adopts a set of principles and priorities for the Cohesion Policy at European level. National and regional authorities in each Member State are then responsible for defining and implementing their own Operational Programme(s), alongside the European Union. These Programmes describe the specific priorities and actions that can be financed locally through the Cohesion Policy. In addition to these programmes, the Cohesion Policy is implemented through the Interreg programmes, which fund cooperation projects between regions from different countries.



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COHESION POLICY IN THE ARAGON REGION (SPAIN)

2021-2027

Over the 2021–2027 period, the Aragon Region is set to receive **€361 million** from the Multiannual Financial Framework that includes the ERDF and ESF+ funds. This is then allocated via the **Aragon Operational Programme**. Compared to the 2014–2020 period, this budget has decreased by 6.4%. This is because the Aragon region is considered to be one of the most developed regions as its GDP is above the European average.

ARAGON OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

This Programme defines how the regional budget of the Cohesion Policy will be allocated in the region. The most developed regions, such as Aragon, are required to earmark **85% of their resource** allocation to achieving **Objective 1 “Smarter Europe”** and **Objective 2 “Greener Europe”**. In addition, **at least 30%** of the total aid from the **ERDF** resources has to contribute to achieving climate objectives and combatting the loss of biodiversity.

Who can benefit from these funds?

All kind of public and private entities can benefit from these funds, such as public authorities, enterprises and associations, as well as private individuals.



DID YOU KNOW?

In the past, the environmental perspective has been fully integrated into the regional policy of the European Union in order to meet the international commitments of the 2015 Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. With this in mind, it is particularly important to manage how funding is used in different regions of Europe.

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INTERREG PROGRAMMES

In addition to the resources allocated via the Aragon Operational Programme, the Region receives funds from different Interreg programmes, as follows:

1 Interregional programme

Interreg Europe (€379 million)

3 Transnational programmes

Interreg SUDOE (€106 million)
Interreg Euro-MED (€216 million)
Interreg POCTEFA (€243 million)

▶ INTERREG EUROPE

What is it? Interreg Europe is a European regional programme that helps regional and local governments to create better policies.

What projects can be financed? The Interreg Europe programme focuses on a single cross-cutting priority: capacity building. Within this scope, it supports the identification, dissemination and transfer of innovative practices that can be used to improve regional development policies.

More info: www.interregeurope.eu

▶ INTERREG SUDOE

What is it? Interreg SUDOE promotes transnational cooperation to solve common problems in Southwestern Europe, such as low investment in research and development, weak competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, and exposure to climate change and environmental risks.

What projects can be financed? Projects must focus on one of the programme's five priorities: research and development, the competitiveness of SMEs, the low-carbon economy, the fight against climate change, the environment and resource efficiency.

More info: www.interreg-sudoe.eu

▶ INTERREG EURO-MED

What is it? The Interreg Euro-MED programme aids the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society in 13 Mediterranean countries. Its aim is to combat the impact of global changes on the Mediterranean's resources while ensuring sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens.

What projects can be financed? Projects should aim to make the Mediterranean smarter and greener. Their objectives should fulfil four complementary missions and one transversal mission: strengthening an innovative, sustainable economy; protecting, restoring and valorising the natural environment and heritage; promoting green living areas; enhancing sustainable tourism; and providing the Mediterranean with better territorial governance (transversal).

More info: www.interreg-med.eu

▶ INTERREG POCTEFA

What is it? Interreg POCTEFA is a European cross-border cooperation programme. It co-finances cross-border cooperation projects for the sustainable development of the Pyrenees (Andorra, France, Spain).

What projects can be financed? Interreg POCTEFA co-finances projects along its five axes: innovation and competitiveness; adaptation to climate change and the prevention and management of risks; the protection, valorisation and sustainable use of local resources; the mobility of goods and people; and skills and inclusion.

More info: www.poctefa.eu

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN INTERREG PROGRAMMES?

The Interreg programmes welcome the participation of organisations from the public and private sector, as well as non-profit organisations. These organisations may participate as project partners but may also contribute as observers or external experts. However, private individuals are not generally accepted as project partners.

HOW TO CREATE A PARTNERSHIP FOR AN INTERREG PROJECT?

The profiles of partners involved in a project proposal should be relevant and complementary. In addition, partners need to have the financial and human resources capacity to implement the project. The budget in most projects exceeds €2 million and is distributed among the partners based on the scope of their roles and responsibilities in the project. 70–80% of the budget of the budget is usually co-financed by the ERDF and the State, with the remainder being covered by the resources of the applicants.

WHAT ARE THE DIRECT BENEFITS OF COOPERATION?

Organisations can learn and exchange knowledge and good practices, set out joint visions and explore potential ways of achieving their goals. They can design projects that will have a direct impact on the pillars of sustainable development and include local people at every stage – from developing the project to its implementation, evaluation, and harnessing the project’s benefits.



FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Europe Direct offices

Aragón: www.aragon.es/-/europa-direct-aragon
Maestrazgo: www.maestrazgo.org/EuropaDirect

WHAT IS MONTANA174?

Montana174 is a communication campaign to inform you – mountain citizen - on the many opportunities offered by the Cohesion Policy in mountain areas. In mountains, the Cohesion Policy gives funds to reinforce digital and social innovation, accelerate climate mitigation and adaptation, support tourism, foster youth employment and enhance mobility.

www.montana174.org



This document was prepared in early 2022 and is based on the draft version of the Operational Programmes. Therefore, part of its content might be subject to change. The final text of the Operational Programmes financed through the 2021–2027 Cohesion Policy will be available at the following QR code:



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