

# HOW CAN THE COHESION POLICY BE USED TO FINANCE PROJECTS IN THE MOUNTAINS? YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

## 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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# HOW WILL THE COHESION POLICY SUPPORT YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN MOUNTAIN AREAS?

The lack of skilled and diversified jobs is one of the main reasons why young people in mountain areas leave their region to study or work elsewhere. Access to quality training and job opportunities are key drivers to ensure the attractiveness and socio-economic dynamism of mountain regions.

The Cohesion Policy supports the creation of jobs and educational opportunities in mountain areas. For the 2021–2027 period, each Member State is to allocate 25% of their Cohesion Policy portfolio to increase social inclusion, and 12.5% of their ESF+ funds to support the employment of young people neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET).

Through its Objective 4 “A More Social Europe”, the Cohesion Policy can help reduce inequalities in access to education by supporting the renovation of schools, the creation of new training courses in mountain areas and activities targeted at vulnerable or isolated groups like young NEET people. Mountain territories can also take advantage of the opportunities offered by promising sectors such as energy or the bio and circular economy to create jobs in mountain areas through Objective 2 “A Greener Europe”. Moreover, the funds directed at mountain areas under Objective 5 “A Europe Closer to citizens”, may also be relevant to address the education and employment challenges.

What is this factsheet for? This factsheet aims to give you some practical examples of how the Cohesion Policy will be used to finance the fight against climate change across Europe’s mountain regions between 2021 and 2027.

## GET INSPIRED!

### ➤ OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME - VEST REGION

**Relevant objective:** To reduce inequalities between rural and urban areas with respect to the accessibility and quality of educational facilities.

**How are mountain areas taken into consideration?**

Specific funds for projects in rural areas – also including mountain territories – are planned.

**What type of projects can be financed?**

- Projects to bridge the quality gap between educational facilities in rural and urban areas
- Help to purchase equipment for schools and specialist laboratories



More information: <https://adrvest.ro/por-2021-2027/>  
Contact: Regional Development Agency for the Western Region  
[office@adrvest.ro](mailto:office@adrvest.ro)



Vest Region  
(Romania)

## ▶ INTERREG EURO-MED

**Relevant objective:** To support the transition to a circular economy.

**How are mountain areas taken into consideration?**

The programme underlines how mountain territories can reduce their dependence from large, urban economic centres by applying circular economy concepts.

**What type of projects can be financed?**

- Innovative green business models in agriculture, food, health, manufacturing, tourism, cultural and creative sectors
- Economic value recovery of waste and transformation into a resource
- Support public authorities in the development and adoption of strategies for the transition to a circular economy.



**Examples of beneficiaries:** Public authorities, SMEs, business support organisations, universities, civil society, NGOs.



Check out the list of eligible areas in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia Portugal, Slovenia, Spain



More information: <https://interreg-med.eu>  
Contact: Interreg MED Managing Authority  
[programme\\_med@maregionsud.fr](mailto:programme_med@maregionsud.fr)

## ▶ ERDF OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME - EMILIA ROMAGNA REGION

**Relevant objective:** To finance the interventions foreseen in the Territorial Strategy for Inner and Mountain Areas (STAMI), an Italian new multi-fund territorial strategy rolled out at regional level that makes it possible to identify specific measures for mountain areas.

**How are mountain areas taken into consideration?**

The STAMI instrument seeks to foster the sustainable development of inner and mountain areas that represent respectively 47% of the territory and 12% of population in this region.



**What type of projects can be financed?**

- Roll out of strategies that support employment, education, vocational training and social inclusion
- Schemes for the requalification, valorisation, regeneration or use of the historical, artistic and cultural heritage
- Schemes to strengthen the role of natural spaces and culture as drivers of inclusion, such as territorial marketing campaigns

**Examples of beneficiaries:** Local authorities (with priority given to structured associations such as unions of municipalities), Emilia-Romagna Region and its in-house companies, nature park authorities.

More information:  
<https://fesr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/2021-2027>  
Contact: Emilia-Romagna Region  
[infoporfesr@regione.emilia-romagna.it](mailto:infoporfesr@regione.emilia-romagna.it)



Region Emilia Romagna  
(Italy)

## INTERREG POCTEFA

**Relevant objective:** To support equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning.

**How are mountain areas taken into consideration?** This programme underlines the need “to meet the needs of the population living in rural and mountainous areas and with a high degree of ageing, or groups with socio-economic difficulties, improving access to public services”.



### What type of actions can be financed?

- Initiatives that bring higher education and vocational training closer to rural and mountainous areas, in particular by developing distance learning.

**Examples of beneficiaries:** Public authorities, universities, vocational training centres, NGOs, Chambers of Agriculture, Crafts, Commerce and Industry, private organisations.

More information: <https://www.poctefa.eu>  
Contact: Working Community of the Pyrenees  
[info@poctefa.eu](mailto:info@poctefa.eu)



Check out the list of eligible areas in  
France, Andorra and Spain



## WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THESE FUNDS?

Public and private organisations can receive funding under the Cohesion Policy, as long as they bring added value to the implementation of projects. These organisations may participate as project partners but may also contribute as observers or external experts. Private individuals are not generally accepted as project partners in territorial programmes but can benefit from funds under the FSE+. The Operational Programmes above provide a non-extensive list of potential beneficiaries.

This document was prepared in early 2022 and it 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:



## 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](http://www.montana174.org)



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