

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

LOMBARDY REGION - ITALY

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 LOMBARDY REGION

The Lombardy Region has presented an investment programme, still in the approval phase, which envisages allocating more than €3.5 billion via the ERDF and ESF+ Operational Programmes of the Lombardy Region, including national and regional co-financing. Thus far, funds have been allocated as follows*:

ERDF Operational Programme

€2 billion

**Objective 1
Smart Europe**
€1,07 billion

**Objective 2
Greener Europe**
€ 633 million

**Objective 5 Europe
closer to citizens**
€ 240 million

Priorities:

- Competitiveness, innovation, and digital connectivity
- Sustainable energy, economy and multimodal urban mobility
- Integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development

ESF+ Operational Programme

€630 million

**Objective 4
More Social
Europe**

Priorities:

- Revival of employment, support to businesses and people affected by the COVID-19 crisis
- Access to education and training services, especially for youth
- Reduction of inequalities, poverty and social exclusion, well-being of families, enhancement of care and personal care services

*This programme is still under discussion. For more information on Inner Areas see the "Regional Strategy for Inner Areas in Lombardy" and the "Agenda for the Counter-Exodus: identification of inner areas for the 2021-2027 European programming cycle".

HOW CAN THE COHESION POLICY BE USED TO HELP MOUNTAIN AREAS IN LOMBARDY?

For the 2021–2027 period, the Lombardy Region has drafted a programme of about €90 million specifically targeted at Inner Areas, that is to say rural areas that are far away from the main service centres (education, health and mobility). Many of these could be found mainly in mountain or foothill areas. In the Lombardy Region, the majority of Inner Areas are in mountainous or foothill areas and are eligible for these funds.

What funds are used to finance Inner Areas?

ERDF, ESF+, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the national stability law, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan and some autonomous resources.

What will they finance?

- Actions to understand the needs of Inner Areas
- Actions to support governance and simplify funding programmes

Who can benefit from these funds?

Beneficiaries of these funds are mainly municipalities, mountain communities, and local action groups. However, some opportunities are also available for other actors such as universities, business consortia, chambers of commerce, educational institutions and associations.

INTERREG PROGRAMMES

In addition to the resources allocated via the ERDF and ESF+ Operational Programmes, the Lombardy Region receives funds from a range of Interreg programmes:

1 Cross-border programme

Interreg Italy-Switzerland

4 Transnational programmes

Interreg Alpine Space
Interreg ADRIAN
Interreg Central Europe
Interreg Euro-MED

1 Interregional programme

Interreg Europe

➤ INTERREG ITALY-SWITZERLAND

What is it? This programme aims to foster cross-border cooperation among seven administrations: four in Italy and three in Switzerland. For the Lombardy territory, the areas eligible for funding included in the cooperation area are the provinces of Lecco, Como, Varese and Sondrio only.

More info: www.interreg-italiasvizzera.eu

➤ INTERREG ALPINE SPACE

What is it? It is a European programme that finances cooperation projects in the Alps. It finances innovative and pioneering ideas that support sustainable economic development, societal wellbeing and the preservation of the exceptional natural environment of the Alps.

More info: www.alpine-space.eu

➤ INTERREG ADRIAN

What is it? This is a European transnational programme that invests in regional innovation, cultural and natural heritage, environmental resilience, sustainable transport and mobility, and capacity building.

More info: www.adrioninterreg.eu

➤ INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE

What is it? This programme supports cooperation beyond borders in Europe to create a smarter, greener, better connected, and more integrated central Europe. The funding can be used to develop and pilot new solutions, build capacities, facilitate knowledge transfer and to prepare (but not finance) large investments.

More info: www.interreg-central.eu

INTERREG EURO-MED

What is it? This programme supports cooperation across Mediterranean borders. It funds projects that seek to build an innovative, sustainable economy; protect, restore and valorise the natural environment and heritage; promote green living areas; and enhance sustainable tourism. The environment should also be at the heart of each mission.

More info: www.interreg-med.eu

INTERREG EUROPE

What is it? This helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy in every field. To do this, it finances projects that create opportunities for regional and local authorities across Europe to share ideas and experience on public policy in practice.

More info: www.interregeurope.eu

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN INTERREG PROGRAMMES?

The Interreg programmes welcome the participation of organisations as **public bodies** (a Municipal Administration or a Region), **Universities or Third Sector entities**, or even a large **enterprise** or an SME, as well as **non-profit organisations**. These organisations may participate as project partners but may also contribute as observers or external experts.

DO YOU NEED MORE HELP WITH UNDERSTANDING HOW TO ACCESS COHESION POLICY FUNDS?



Specific support is available to potential applicants who are interested in these programmes such as periodic information days, workshops and capacity building opportunity, as well as direct references with national and regional contact points.

More info:

<https://www.ue.regione.lombardia.it/> - <https://www.cte.regione.lombardia.it/>

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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