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PRESS RELEASE

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EU Cohesion Policy is helping to weather the crisis and produce growth, says Commission 2013 Strategic Report

The European Commission has today presented an overview of how EU Structural Funds are working in Member States. The 'Strategic Report' on the implementation of 2007-2013 Cohesion Policy programmes pulls together available information from Member States, up to end-2011 in most cases. With 4 more years to go until the programmes finish in 2015, investments under the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and European Social Fund have already led to progress and improvement for many citizens.

Across the EU, these include:

- **1.9 million** more people now have **broadband** access;
- **2.6 million** more people are served by water supply, **5.7 million** more by waste water projects;
- there are **460 km of TEN-T roads and 334 km of TEN-T rail**; and
- **2.4 million** people assisted by the European Social Fund found a new job.

Innovation and small business are receiving a huge boost from cohesion policy investments with many more in the pipeline. So far:

- **53,240 RTD** projects and 16,000 business-research projects received investment and
- **53,160 start-ups** have been supported.

As funds are utilised and projects get off the ground, the report documents:

- A significant increase in the number of people supported in in the area of employment **from around 10 million annually before 2010 to some 15 million** on an annual basis since then; and
- A significant acceleration of results since 2010 in the area of support for SMEs: Almost **400,000 jobs** created (half of these in 2010/11) including **15,600 research jobs** and **167,000 jobs in SMEs**.

Commenting on the report, Regional Policy Commissioner Johannes Hahn said: *"This report provides an invaluable snapshot of a policy that is delivering across most of the EU's priorities and investing in growth when it is most desperately needed. We are providing support to new innovative business and creating good sustainable jobs for the future, giving remote regions broadband, tackling the brain drain, and building vital transport links that contribute to regions' competitiveness. The policy has also shown itself capable of great flexibility, responding to the crisis and adapting to the changing needs of people and their communities."*

He added: *"But we also have lessons to learn: results are sometimes patchy and Member States need to speed up their efforts to use the EU resources. As we look ahead to the new programming period, we expect Member States and regions to focus the policy even more on results and priorities that will have the greatest impact."*

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Lázsló Andor added, *"With the crisis, EU cohesion policy funds have become even more important as a source of investment across the Union. The European Social Fund is delivering crucial support to our human capital, especially helping young people to maximise their chances of a successful career. The preparation of the next generation of programmes is a unique opportunity to underpin our growth and jobs strategy with significant financial support. Social and human capital investment needs to play an important role in this."*

The "Strategic Report" outlines the progress of each country on delivering EU objectives, in line with the targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It encourages Member States to measure progress in key strategic sectors, such as research and innovation, rail, energy, capacity building, sustainable urban transport, job creation and training.

The reports submitted by the 27 Member States at the end of 2012 (based mainly on 2011 data) provide the Commission with the first opportunity to report, during a programming period, on progress in delivering outputs and results and to highlight important and timely messages on the potential of Cohesion Policy to play its part in the EU's economic recovery. The Commission identifies the investment areas where action must be taken to speed up the selection and execution of projects co-financed in 2007-2013 in order to meet the objectives set.

Background

Through its three Funds - the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund - EU cohesion policy is investing €347 billion in 2007-2013 in the 27 Member States. This represents 35% of the total EU budget for the same period (€975 billion).

The Report also underlines the relevance of the profound reforms currently being negotiated between the European Parliament and EU governments for cohesion policy from 2014-2020, including a more strategic concentration of resources on key priorities and more focus on results and evaluation.

More information

Annual Implementation reports for 27 Member States

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/how/policy/strategic_report_en.cfm

More information on European cohesion policy:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm

(European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund)

Legislative proposals from Commission on Cohesion Policy Reform:

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/what/future/index_en.cfm

European Social Fund:

<http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

Audiovisual material on projects and people supported by the European Social Fund

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/video/videos_en.htm

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