

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2012

Executive Summary

18 July 2013

Annual Implementation Report 2012: CENTRAL EUROPE allocates all funds and starts defining the future Programme

Building on a sound implementation of 124 funded projects, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme in 2012 focused on further capitalising project results, helping to link these to the wider political framework of EU Cohesion Policy and the EU 2020 Strategy.

At the same time, the Programme kicked off the process of preparing the new CENTRAL EUROPE Programme 2014-2020, based on the interest of all eight Programme Member States to continue transnational cooperation in the area and building on experiences made in the programming period 2007-2013.

Implementation: Programme allocates all funds and simplifies reporting

By the end of 2012, all available CENTRAL EUROPE Programme budget was allocated to 124 projects (117 standard and seven strategic projects) with an average size of 1,9 million Euros ERDF.

Overall, the funded projects well cover the Priorities and Areas of Intervention defined in the CENTRAL EUROPE Operational Programme. All projects continued to be thoroughly monitored in 2012 by means of six-monthly Progress Reports and Final Reports. In comparison to the previous year, a natural increase of spending performance could be recognised in 2012. This increase was due to the fact that approved projects of the second and third calls entered into their full implementation phase in addition to first call projects which, in turn, started with closing their activities. In 2012, the Programme finalised the monitoring of 127 Progress Reports releasing a total of around 31,8 million Euros ERDF to the projects.

2012 also saw a mid-term budget review of approved projects, carried out in addition to regular monitoring activities. This review resulted in savings of 1,4 million Euros ERDF from 12 projects. The Programme decided to use these funds for funding additional projects within the 4th Call for proposals, as well as for funding additional communication and capitalisation activities.

A major challenge linked to project monitoring was the high workload faced in particular when analysing the financial parts of the reports. In order to improve this situation, the Programme managed to further simplify the monitoring process. One important measure was the decision to allow selected projects to report on a yearly instead of a six-monthly basis in order to catch up with reporting delays.

Result focus: Programme ensures strategic relevance

Most CENTRAL EUROPE projects are contributing to the EU 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. They are supporting all flagship initiatives, especially on Innovation Union and Resource-efficient Europe. An independent evaluation of the Programme, finalised in 2012, thus came to the conclusion that *“the current CE Programme is already well-positioned for the future with most of its projects showing a strong link to the future EC policy objectives.”*¹

All projects of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme have also continued to create networks and to realise pilot actions. The evaluators found in this context that *“even though the exchange of know-how and knowledge through transnational cooperation still remains the main factor of success for CE projects, the results are being integrated into the local political agendas and the development of new skills (or the strengthening of existing ones) within the regional and local authorities.”*² Ultimately, CENTRAL EUROPE thus helps to promote regional competitiveness and innovation, to improve regional connectivity and contributes to a clean and sustainable environment.

Money well invested: pilot investments and leverage effects

The result orientation of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme continues to show positive effects in 2012: almost half of the 124 approved projects (48 %) are planning pilot investments. The number of pilot investments implemented by projects by the end of 2012 was 16 % of the overall target - a figure that is expected to increase rapidly over the next two years because pilot actions are mostly implemented towards the end of a project.

The budget foreseen for investments is around 10 million Euros which amounts to approximately 3,5 % of the total budget allocated to projects. Furthermore, 24 approved projects will prepare investments for upcoming larger scale projects worth 1,5 billion Euros in total - of which 550 million Euros have already been reported.

Another remarkable figure is the involvement of private partners, who represented 16 % of all project partners, i.e. four times the share of 4 % originally expected. This relatively high attractiveness of CENTRAL EUROPE for private partners is further proof that the intended Programme result orientation is successfully implemented.

Overall, the project partnerships involve a wide range of relevant institutions at all governance levels allowing for future synergies and cross-fertilisation among each other. However, administrative obstacles still hampered the effective involvement of potential partners located in EU and non-EU regions outside the Programme area.

¹ Final Programme Evaluation Report, Consortium Soges S.p.A. – ERAC. December 2012.

² Ditto

Reaching out: Programme intensifies analysis and communication of results

Following up on activities in 2011, the CENTRAL Programme has further improved the capitalisation of its thematic results. Cooperation with and targeted information of thematically relevant stakeholders continued and included the establishment of contacts to various European, national and international institutions.

A graphic analysis of CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation networks visualised the intensive and well-spread cooperation among 1 300 institutions in the core area³. In addition, a first of six planned thematic studies was commissioned to identify the niche of the Programme's transport projects in the EU policy framework. All analysis was communicated through the Programme website, Facebook and newsletters and encouraged cross-fertilisation activities at Programme events.

A new publication "*PORTRAITS - Project Stories from the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme*" furthermore introduced stakeholders and the interested public to the CENTRAL EUROPE story so far, showcasing in particular those 29 projects that were approved in 2008.

Building on the positive experience in previous years, the Programme also participated and contributed to a series of events organised by other European institutions and financial instruments bearing relevance for European Territorial Cooperation.

CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020: defining the new Programme

In 2012, the European Commission informed all stakeholders that the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme will continue to support regional cooperation among central European countries in 2014-2020. A Programme Steering Group - installed already in 2011 and made up of representatives of the current Programme Member States - therefore continued to discuss key variables to shape the new Programme throughout the year 2012.

In line with the proposed legislative package on Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 and as a first step towards the new Programme, an in-depth analysis of current and future challenges, needs and potentials that characterise the central Europe area was finalised in autumn 2012.⁴ Through personal interviews and an online survey more than 1 000 stakeholders were directly involved and consulted. Furthermore, two tenders were prepared and launched to identify experts for drafting the new Operational Programme as well as for carrying out the ex-ante evaluation and the strategic environmental assessment.

³ Maps are available in the thematic sections of the Programme website www.central2013.eu.

⁴ ÖIR/PAN IGiPZ, CENTRAL EUROPE PROGRAMME: Results of the regional analysis. Document analysis, online survey, interviews, and SWOT. September 2012.