

COHESIFY: Background, objectives & methodology

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COHESIFY launch, 17 June 2016, CoR, Brussels



The COHESIFY project (February 2016-April 2018) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 693127

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

OVERALL AIM

to analyse the impact of Cohesion policy on citizens support for and identification with the EU ... and...

.... to determine the implications for EU strategies for communicating EU Cohesion policy to citizens



FUNDING
2,498,787 €



DURATION
27 MONTHS

CONTEXT

- EU is struggling to deal with problems – economic crisis, growth, unemployment, migration
- Contested and variable public support for European integration
- Debates about the need to reconnect with EU citizens and to foster a common European identity to underpin legitimacy of the EU and integration
- Lack of systematic and robust knowledge about the impacts of specific EU policies on identity in different territorial contexts

CONTEXT

EU Cohesion policy is the most explicit and visible EU expression of solidarity


"No Community could maintain itself nor have a meaning for the people which belong to it so long as some have very different standards of living and have to doubt the common will of all to help each Member State to better the conditions of its people"

Thomson Report, 1973

Claimed to bring the EU closer to citizens:

- support for local/regional development to improve people's lives
- multi-level governance model, designed and implemented in partnership with local organisations

Objectives of COHESIFY

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- i. **investigate the impact of Cohesion policy on citizens support for and identification with the EU** across Member States and regions
 - ii. **assess the factors shaping Cohesion policy impacts on attitudes/identity,** including the effectiveness of communication strategies and measures in shaping public opinion
 - iii. **formulate policy recommendations** for improving their impact and increase civic appreciation of Cohesion policy
 - vii. **disseminate the research outputs** to journalists and stakeholders and reach out to citizens at EU, national and local levels

Analytical framework: Conceptual background

- European identity is a **complex and multidimensional** concept
 - cognitive: whether people categorise (identify) themselves as European
 - affective: whether people are emotionally attached (the 'we-feeling')
 - evaluative: the underpinning content (intensity, civic/cultural-ethnic)
- European identity has a **strong civic component** based on shared political rights and democratic citizenship
- European identity does not necessarily **compete with other territorial identities**
- European identity **can be measured directly and indirectly**
 - mass survey questions (belonging, thinking of oneself as European, attachment, pride etc.)
 - talking to citizens' about experiences and senses of living in Europe

Analytical framework: European identity drivers

- Identity-building policies and symbols (Euro, flag, Europe Day, Erasmus, citizenship, communication etc.)
- Political parties, media and elites
- Resonance with national identity and political norms
- A range of individual-level factors
 - instrumental cost-benefit calculations
 - transnational experiences/interactions
 - pre-existing territorial identities
 - distrust of national political institutions
 - socio-demographics (income, occupational status and educational levels)

Analytical framework: Cohesion policy factors

Policy

- Scale and scope of funding: varied intensity, visibility of projects
- Objectives/programme type: mainstream v ETC
- Governance models: centralised/decentralised, subsumed/differentiated

Outcomes

- effectiveness, absorption, regularity-legality

Communication

- Effectiveness of communication strategies and measures
- Media narratives and tone

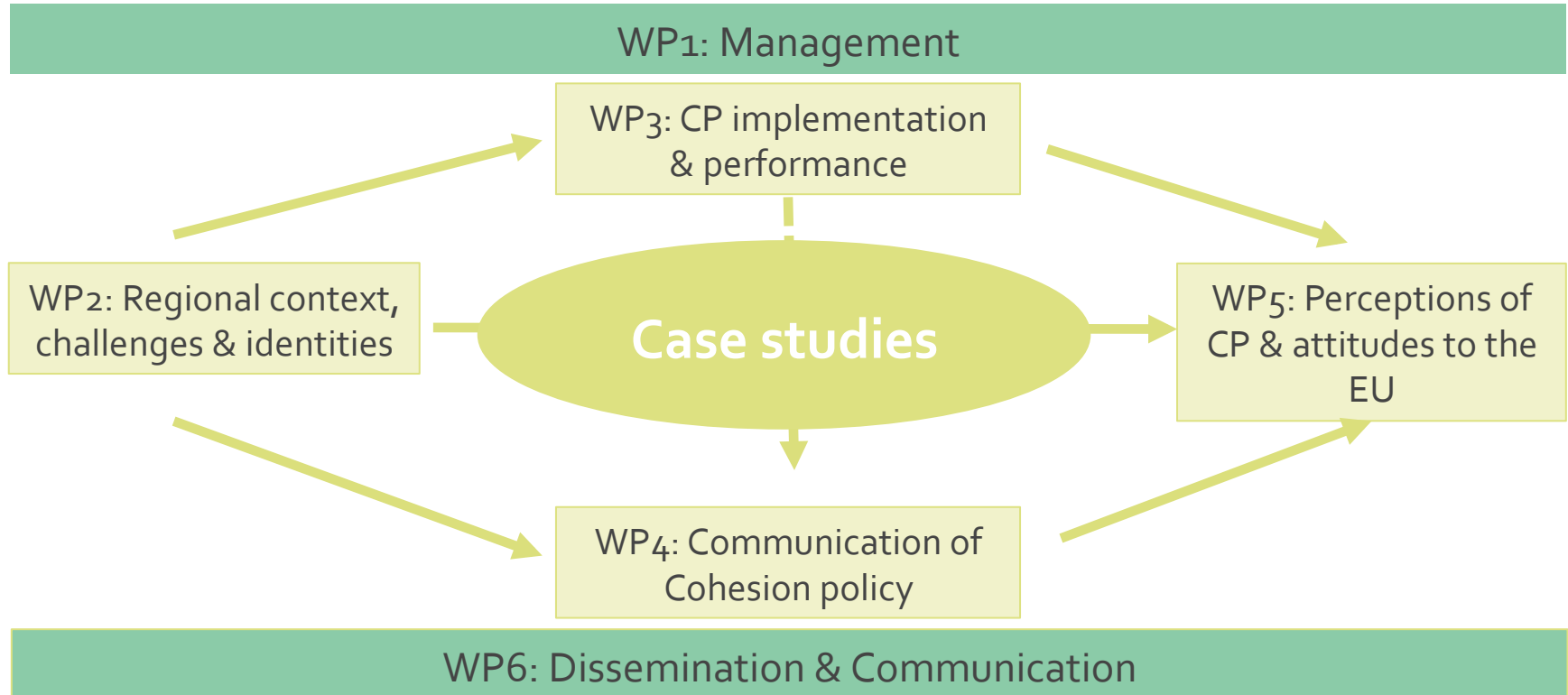
Politicisation

- Political parties and interests groups

Contextual

- Territorial diversity in admin systems, civil participation, development paths, history etc.
- The economic crisis and policy responses

Structure of Work



Case studies: Mixed methods approach

- Territorial context, challenges, identities (WP₂)
 - Territorial analysis of European perceptions, values and identities
 - Politics party manifesto analysis
- Policy implementation and performance (WP₃)
 - data/documentary analysis
 - online survey and in-depth interviews of stakeholders
- Communication strategies and media (WP₄)
 - social media framing analysis
 - documentary analysis of communication strategies
 - online survey and in-depth interviews of communication stakeholders
- Citizens' perceptions and EU identification (WP₅)
 - citizens' survey (representative samples at regional level)
 - focus groups with citizens

THE COHESIFY TEAM

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2. Politecnico di Milano (IT)
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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