

CASTILLA Y LEÓN

GENERAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

€37.4 billion have been allocated to Spain from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for the period 2014-2020 through 64 national and regional programmes. With a national contribution of €15.88 billion, Spain has a total budget of €53.28 billion to invest in areas closely linked to the Europe 2020 objectives.

Castilla y León is the largest autonomous community in Spain, with an area of 94,226 km² (even larger than the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg combined), and the sixth largest population despite having only 2,519,875 inhabitants. It is made up of 9 provinces with the administrative capital located in Valladolid.

Fig. 1 Castilla y León region



In summary, two factors have marked the contribution of Cohesion policy from 2007 to the present. One of them was the economic crisis that considerably affected the regional situation in Castilla y León (unemployment, difficulty in absorbing funds, etc.) and therefore the implementation of the 2007-2013 Operational Programmes. The other has been the transition from a phasing out region in the period 2007-2013 to a development region in the period 2014-2020, which has led to a considerable lower volume of European funds.

Regarding the objectives of the operational programmes for both periods, in 2007-2013 more investment was made with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in major



infrastructures, such as railways, while in the period 2014-2020 investment was more focused on technology and the competitiveness of businesses. With regard to communication, encouraged by the networks created at national and regional level, there is a greater emphasis on involving the beneficiaries in the communication of European Funds.

From 2007, and as in the rest of Spanish regions, two programming periods of the Cohesion policy have been implemented in Castilla y León that have led us to its current development:

1. 2007-2013 period. In order to ensure the coherence of the Community interventions within the framework of the "Regional competitiveness and employment" Objective, Castilla y León, a region identified as phasing in or with a growth effect for that period, designed a single strategy for ERDF and European Social Fund (ESF) interventions that was made up of, on the one hand, a common list of objectives for both Funds that considered the development of the NUTS 2 region as a whole, and on the other hand, a few particular priorities for each intervention. The ERDF budget for this period was €181,194,437 and €125,276,907 for ESF.

Efforts have been concentrated on supporting investments in companies, the improvement of rail services, or Research&Development grants for SMEs. The Management and distribution of drinking water, promoting the protection of biodiversity and nature including Natura 2000 and integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration (URBAN).

The social objectives of the operational programme focused on the reintegration into the labour market of disadvantaged people, the promotion of collaboration in employment matters, the application of preventive and active measures in the labour market and the development of human potential in the field of research and innovation.

As regards the ERDF, there is a general view obtained in the stakeholders interviews that major issues and needs related to high-cost permanent infrastructures have been solved and that their realisation would have been difficult to be viable without the contribution of the Cohesion policy funds, for example transport infrastructures, buildings, scientific and technological buildings, innovation centres, and so forth.

2. 2014-2020 period. This time as Castilla y León was a more developed region, two regional operational programmes of the ERDF and ESF were put into place taking into account the lessons learned from the 2007 - 2013 period .The EU budget has been considerably reduced compared to the previous period for ERDF, €314,403,219, and for ESF €98,706,192.

The ERDF Operational Programme concentrates a significant part of its resources on technological development and innovation, in order to improve the competitiveness of SMEs and to preserve and promote the efficiency of the resources.



On another note, the ESF Operational Programme concentrates a significant portion of its resources on the promotion of sustainability and quality of employment and social inclusion, and the fight against poverty and all forms of discrimination.

Castilla y León also participates in 7 multi-regional programmes and 3 cross-border cooperation programmes.

The communication of funds has been articulated through a joint communication strategy for both funds in the two programming periods. The budget devoted to the communication actions amounted up to 0.30% of the total budget for the ERDF and ESF regional Operational Programmes in the 2007-2013 period, while in the current 2014-2020 it has increased to 0.46% of the Operational Programmes, evidence of an increased importance assigned to the dissemination of the actions undertaken.

The governance model for communication in Castilla y León was supported at national level by the communication network GERIP composed of persons responsible in the field of communication of the Regional Communication Plans. The National Managing Authority has also set up GRECO-AGE, a network made up of the communication officers of the managing bodies of the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund of the General State Administration, which serves as a channel for informing and taking decisions on matters relating to information and publicity within the scope of its competences within each Operational Programme.

The Government of Castilla y León has set up a communication network for the 2014-2020 period with the participation of all implementing agencies of the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes, in addition to the intermediate bodies, and which allows for coordination and exchange of information on the progress of the communication strategy at regional level.

For all these reasons, the communication networks created at both national and regional levels provide a fundamental common framework for structuring a more efficient communication.

According to more than 50% of respondents of the stakeholder survey, communication efforts are effective. Perhaps the greatest challenge are the establishment of good working relations with the media and press to reach the general public.

Most people who participated in the citizens' survey agree that Cohesion policy funds finance those investment projects which your municipality/region needs the most (65%) and that the administration has been delivered in an efficient way (65%).

