



Successful ERDF-funded business support projects (left to right): Research centre for regenerative therapies – Excellence cluster, Saxony, Germany; Ravensbourne business eco-incubator, London, UK; BIC Granada, part of the incentive programme for innovation and business development, Andalucía, Spain.

▶ EX POST EVALUATION OF COHESION POLICY, 2007-2013

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY IN A TIME OF CRISIS?

It is time to start planning the *ex post* evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period. The legal requirement is for the European Commission to complete the evaluation by the end of 2015. The Directorates General for Regional and Urban Policy and for Employment and Social Affairs are co-ordinating a series of thematic evaluations looking at various aspects of the implementation and impacts of cohesion policy.

For the 2000-2006 programming period, the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy carried out a very extensive *ex post* evaluation, involving 19 different work packages over a 5 year period, finishing in 2012. This time round the exercise will be more concentrated. Some questions raised in the 2000-2006 evaluation will be explored in more depth, while new areas will also be examined. Given that the current programming period will not be completed

as the evaluation is being done, areas of intervention which take longer to have an impact (e.g., infrastructure) will receive less attention.

Some of the main questions for the evaluation will be:

- ▶ What was the impact of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund? What happened to regional policy during the crisis? Did regional policy programmes manage to maintain development investment during this time? What does the crisis tell us about the strengths of different levels of governance in different Member States?
- ▶ What does the ERDF support in the areas of SMEs and innovation? Are these interventions those which the economic literature suggests is the most effective? What evidence is there of the effects of these interventions?
- ▶ Does the ERDF support large enterprises? If so, to do what and what is the impact?

- ▶ What is the rationale for and what are the early outcomes of venture capital schemes set up with support from the ERDF? What are the costs?
- ▶ Which transport and environmental infrastructures have been built with support from the Structural Funds? Are they likely to be financially sustainable, based on past experience?
- ▶ How have the Structural Funds invested in energy efficiency and what have the impacts been? Which Member States have been successful and why and what obstacles have others faced?
- ▶ What is the rationale for investment in tourism, culture, natural heritage and creative industries? What are the main types of investment and what is the evidence on effectiveness?
- ▶ What have European Territorial Cooperation Programmes achieved, especially in the areas of research, technology and innovation, environmental protection and enhancement and transport? How have transnational and inter-regional programmes influenced policy development across the EU?
- ▶ What strategies for integrated urban development are supported from the Structural Funds? What is the role of investment in social infrastructure?

A synthesis report will be produced at the end of 2015 as well as thematic reports for each block of the evaluation as well as country and regional reports which will be accessible through electronic maps.

The methods to be employed will include literature reviews, data analysis, case studies, surveys, macro and sectoral economic models. As a first step, DG Regional and Urban Policy has launched an evaluation of the data reported by Managing

Authorities in their Annual Implementation Reports. This will enhance the robustness of the evaluation's later work packages and will also help those responsible for designing the 2014-2020 programmes to improve the quality and reliability of their monitoring systems.

Contributing to the analysis and the evaluation findings, a series of consultations will be held throughout the process – with academic experts, with thematic experts, and with those responsible for designing and implementing the policy across the 28 Member States. Through this dialogue, the DG Regional and Urban Policy expects Member States and regions to take ownership of evaluation findings and take them into account in the 2014-2020 programmes – which will still be at a very early stage of implementation at the end of 2015.

The 2000-2006 *ex post* evaluation strongly influenced the design of the 2014-2020 programming period. The focus on specific objectives – specific to the national or regional context, the requirement for result indicators expressing that objective with a baseline and target – the use of common indicators with agreed definitions, the clarification of the roles of monitoring and evaluation, and the requirement for Managing Authorities to undertake impact evaluations all found their rationale in the findings of the evaluation. DG Regional and Urban Policy expects that this *ex post* evaluation will provide further insights into how to improve the design and the impact of cohesion policy.

▶ FIND OUT MORE
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/impact/evaluation/index_en.cfm