# *Executive Summary of*
# CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 Operational Programme
## *Draft Version 3.2 – December 2013*

The transnational programme CENTRAL EUROPE will support regional cooperation among central European countries in the upcoming programming period 2014-2020. Key variables of the continuing programme have been agreed by participating Member States following thorough consultation with partners and stakeholders throughout 2013. This paper summarises the latest version of the draft Operational Programme, providing an overview on the strategic orientation of the new programme. The full draft of the Operational Programme is available for download on the programme website (http://www.central2013.eu/CE2014-20 - in English language).

## 1. CENTRAL EUROPE 2020: Background

Covering an area of over 1 million sqare km across nine countries, the area of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is home to about 142 million people. Seven EU Member States are participating with all regions (Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) while two Member States are participating with selected regions only (Germany and Italy).

**Figure 1: Programme area of CENTRAL EUROPE 2020 on a European scale**

Central Europe is highly heterogeneous in geographical terms (marked by coastal areas, mountain ranges, rural areas, large urban agglomerations etc.) as well as in economic and social terms (exposing the lingering east-west divide). The programme area has a large number of assets but also faces numerous challenges in various fields affecting regional development, which have all been thoroughly analysed before concentrating the programme on four strategic priorities. Results expected from the programme will directly contribute to reaching goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## 2. CENTRAL EUROPE 2020: Strategic Priorities

The CENTRAL EUROPE Programme overall objective is "to cooperate beyond borders to make central European cities and regions better places to live and work". Put more precisely, transnational cooperation should become the catalyst for implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. The programme will build regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels. In doing so, it will coordinate with other efforts in the regions including, amongst other, national and regional programmes supported by structural and investment funds, macro-regional strategies, the Horizon 2020 programme or the European Investment Bank.

Within four priority axes (further described below) specific actions will be supported and various outputs obtained. The focus will be on policy-learning and implementation-oriented approaches at the transnational level. More concretely, actions will include the development and implementation of strategies and action plans, the development, testing and implementation of tools, the preparation of larger investment, the implementation of pilot actions as well as capacity building measures including training.

### *Priority axis 1 – "Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive"*

Under this priority, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme addresses key socio-economic challenges and needs within central Europe that are related to smart growth as defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy. It aims at more effective investments in research, innovation and education. The programme will help strengthening potentials of technology-oriented areas that are destinations of foreign investments and capital flows, notably through better linking actors of innovation systems. This will enhance the transfer of research and development (R&D) results and the set-up of cooperative initiatives and clusters. It will also address regional disparities in knowledge and education such as brain drain, and strengthen capacities and competences for entrepreneurship and social innovation responding, amongst other, to demographic change challenges.

The financial allocation to this priority is around Euro 68,5 million. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the two specific objectives formulated under this priority:

- To improve sustainable linkages among actors of innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity
- To improve knowledge and skills for advancing economic and social innovation

### *Priority axis 2 – "Cooperating on low carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE"*

This priority aims at increasing the use of renewable energies and improving energy efficiency while exploiting the economic growth potential of the low carbon sector. The programme will also contribute to enhancing knowledge and skills with regard to efficient energy management of public infrastructures. The development and implementation of territorially based low carbon strategies and mobility in functional urban areas will be supported to tackle the challenges central Europe is facing in energy production and consumption. This will also contribute to mitigating climate change.

The financial allocation to this priority is around Euro 44 million. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the three specific objectives formulated under this priority:

- To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures
- To improve territorially based energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation

- To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO2 emissions

***Priority axis 3 – 'Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE''***

This priority responds to the need for protecting and sustainably using natural and cultural heritage and resources, which are subject to increasing environmental and economic pressures as well as usage conflicts. Heritage and resources also constitute valuable assets of central European regions and are important location factors benefitting their development. Furthermore, the programme will focus on improving the quality of the environment in functional urban areas. To this aim, key challenges like land use conflicts, air, soil and water pollution or waste management will be addressed. Improvements will directly benefit the quality of life in cities.

The financial allocation to this priority is around Euro 88 million. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the three specific objectives formulated under this priority:

- To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources
- To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources
- To improve environmental management of functional urban areas

***Priority axis 4 – "Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE"***

Under this priority, answers are provided to the core-periphery dichotomy in the CENTRAL EUROPE area. The programme will do so by reducing the gap between peripheral and less accessible regions and the area's well-connected centres. It will improve connections of regions and cities to the European transport networks and strengthen multi-modal environmentally-friendly passenger and freight transport.

The financial allocation to this priority is around Euro 29 million. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the three specific objectives formulated under this priority:

- To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks
- To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions

## 3. CENTRAL EUROPE 2020: Simplified and Sustainable Implementation

To achieve above objectives, the programme will set up an effective management, implementation and monitoring structure based on experiences made in the ongoing CENTRAL EUROPE 2007-2013 Programme. A lighter set of rules and simpler administrative procedures will be set in place for an effective implementation of the programme.

Sustainable development has been considered as a horizontal principle throughout the preparation of the CENTRAL EUROPE Operational Programme. It will be further respected during implementation by installing an appropriate management. The following general principles will be adopted in the selection of project proposals and the monitoring of the implementation of approved projects:

- To direct investments towards the most resource-efficient and sustainable options;
- To avoid investments that may have a significant negative environmental or climate impact and to support actions to mitigate any remaining negative effects;

- To take a long-term perspective when 'life-cycle' costs of alternative options for investment are compared;
- To encourage the use of green public procurement.

All projects supported by the programme will in addition have to respect relevant rules and policies for environmental protection and sustainable development, including amongst other the reviewed European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development, the Flora-Fauna-Habitat Directive and the Birds Directive.

Furthermore, the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme will respect the principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination throughout all stages of its implementation. The programme strives for promoting equal opportunities and preventing any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during its life cycle and in particular in relation to access to funding taking account of the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disability.

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