

General Affairs Council (Cohesion)

Brussels, 18 November 2021

The General Affairs Council meeting dedicated to cohesion policy will be held in Brussels on Thursday, 18 November. It will take place in the morning, starting at 10.00.

Chair: **Zvonko Černač**, Slovenia's Minister for Development and European Cohesion Policy

European Commission participation: **Elisa Ferreira**, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the contribution of cohesion policy to the recovery, competitive sustainability, the green and digital transitions, resilience, and economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The Council will also approve conclusions on the inclusion of San Marino in the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR).

Press conference: at the end of the meeting +/- 13.00 ([live streaming](#))

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[General Affairs Council \(Cohesion\) - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

Conclusions on San Marino

Starting at 10.00, the Council will first approve conclusions on the inclusion of the Republic of San Marino in the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). This is a macro-regional strategy endorsed by the European Council in 2014.

EUSAIR was jointly developed by the European Commission and by the countries and stakeholders of the Adriatic-Ionian Region which agreed to work together in the areas of common interest for the benefit of each country and the region as a whole.

[Draft Council conclusions on the inclusion of San Marino in EUSAIR](#)

Cohesion policy contribution to the recovery and the green and digital transitions

Ministers will then hold a policy debate on the contribution of cohesion policy programmes to the recovery, competitive sustainability, the green and digital transitions, resilience, and economic, social and territorial cohesion. They will discuss the challenges and opportunities in the coming years.

When the pandemic struck in 2020, cohesion policy provided the first emergency response. By swiftly amending the cohesion policy funds' rules, the EU was able to release about €18 billion to help member states tackle the health crisis.

In the medium term, the REACT-EU initiative made additional resources available for existing cohesion programmes as part of the Union's recovery effort.

Nonetheless, the economic and social aftermath of the pandemic poses a considerable challenge for the territorial cohesion of the EU, not least because different regions have not been affected in the same way and are not equally well-equipped to rebuild their economies. Rural and peripheral regions remain the most vulnerable.

The crisis, however, also provides unprecedented opportunities, thanks to the massive package of public investment through the combination of Next Generation EU resources and the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, which will support the climate and digital transitions.

In the debate, ministers will discuss how member states can maximise the benefits from the remaining 2014-2020 cohesion funding, the REACT-EU initiative, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and the new 2021-2027 cohesion policy allocations, including the Just Transition Fund.

To achieve these synergies, there must be effective mechanisms for coordinating the cohesion funds with other EU instruments - especially the Recovery and Resilience Facility - which have different objectives and use different delivery modes.

To steer the debate, the Slovenian presidency has prepared a background paper. Ministers are invited to consider two questions:

- How can cohesion policy be combined with other EU instruments to further reduce development disparities and enhance resilience in the medium and long term?
- How can the different needs of individual regions and territories be properly addressed and the implementation of EU funds be brought closer to beneficiaries and citizens?

[Presidency background paper](#)