

# INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN COHESION POLICY FOR CANDIDATE AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATE COUNTRIES

FRAMEWORK, EXPERIENCES AND INSTRUMENTS



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Hardcover  
ISBN 10: 84-95201-25-9  
ISBN 13: 978-84-95201-25-6  
REGISTER NUMBER: 09/80953

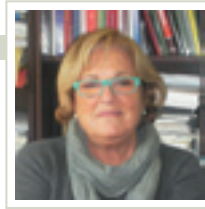
Editors: Francesc Morata and Andrea Noferini  
Cover design and interior graphics by 3d2 Grupo Creativo ( [www.ofinetwebmedia.com](http://www.ofinetwebmedia.com) )  
Printed in Spain by Reproducciones Barcelona, s.l.

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## Foreword



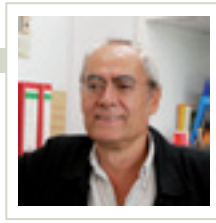
Prof. *Blanca Vilà Costa*  
Director IUEE

Cohesion policy has been crucial for Spain over the last two decades; a source of growth and the reason for significant structural initiatives in a complex, decentralised and plural southern EU Member State. The moment has arrived to transfer these potentialities to the new member states and to the future candidate countries, thus creating and consolidating this “virtuous circle” involved in the fundamental EU structural action. From 2013 onwards, the older beneficiaries have a difficult lesson to learn: from achieving convergence to aspiring for excellence - the next important step to take.

The University Institute for European Studies was founded in 1985 by several members of the Social Sciences faculty - mainly from Law and Economy, the year that Portugal and Spain signed the Treaty of Accession to the European Economic Community. As a legal entity, the IUEE constitutes a consortium between the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the Catalan Administration, promoting postgraduate European Studies (Official Master’s Degree & PhD in European advanced studies; Master’s Degree in European Policies in Development Cooperation), and enhancing basic and applied research in these fields from a very broad perspective.

The IUEE, a Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence basing its research on a Mediterranean and trans-disciplinarian perspective, holds three Jean Monnet Chairs directly and four SGR consolidated Research Groups in Law (GEIE/ IDT; Freedom-Security & Justice and Migration policies), EU External Policy (Observatory, an inter-institutional Group with IBEI-Cidob) and Governance issues, plus two Research Groups in Applied Economy (related to IEIE, Mexico-ITAM), and Accessibility under European standards (ACCEPLAN, Observatory of accessibility).

Finally, I would like to remind you that the “structural” language which cohesion and other EU actions reveal has been present over the last two decades in the work carried out by our institution, with research into decentralisation, the impact of FEDER on Spanish regions from a comparative perspective, participation of regional entities in Spain external initiatives, or Market structures (general approach or sectorial approaches: as well as energy or the environment) and trans-national infrastructures. We are aware that from an economic standpoint we belong fully to the Mediterranean South of Europe, and this publication contains some useful tools and materials for reflection, to encourage discussion on this extremely fruitful and shared experience that cohesion is and has been for decades.



Prof. *Francesc Morata Tierra*  
Project Director

## Preface

This user guide on EU Cohesion policy is one of the main outcomes of the two week Seminar the IUEE and the AECID (Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development) organised in Barcelona in December 2008. Following on from the Seminar's work, the guide has been designed to take into account the practical aspects of Cohesion policy as well as those conceptual issues which are necessary to understand its specific mechanisms. It therefore results from a close collaboration between academia, public institutions and private experts.

Our aim is twofold: to introduce the readers to the management of Cohesion policy based on the Spanish experience at various levels of government; and to foster closer links among the candidate and pre-candidate countries, since they are confronted with similar problems and opportunities in dealing with territorial development. Although the Seminar was by itself an interesting forum for establishing personal and institutional links between the participants, the blog ([www.thewayto.eu](http://www.thewayto.eu)) which complements the present user guide is expected to provide more opportunities for networking by means of the exchange of ideas and information.

The text is organised according to the main issues that were discussed in Barcelona. Part I concentrates on the general framework of Cohesion policy and the challenges of the Pre-Accession Instrument. Part II is devoted to analysis of the Spanish experience at central, regional and local levels. It also pays particular attention to the management of Territorial Cooperation, a topic of great concern in the Balkans region.

Part III introduces an interesting and practical topic that was not fully dealt with in the Barcelona Seminar: the experiences and instruments of the new member states. Finally, Part IV focuses on crucial technical and legal requirements related to the management of Cohesion policy projects.

I really hope this publication will respond not only to the expectations of those participating in the Barcelona seminar, but also to the practical needs of the people involved in the management of IPA projects. The present project is a good example of the priority the IUEE is giving to assisting the candidate and pre-candidate countries in the building of their new institutional capacities.

To conclude, as Project Director I would like to thank all the contributors, and the AECID, represented by Mrs. Inma Aguado, for its institutional and financial support. A special debt is owed to the staff of the IUEE, and especially to Andrea Noferini, Lucia Popartan and Marta Mir.

# List of Acronyms

AC = Autonomous Community  
AECID = Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development  
CARDS = Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation  
CBC = Cross-border cooperation  
CF = Cohesion Fund  
CIP = Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme  
CSGs = Community Strategic Guidelines  
EC = European Commission  
EEA = European Economic Area  
EGTC = European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation  
ERDF = European Regional Development Fund  
ESF = European Social Fund  
ETC = European Territorial Cooperation  
EU = European Union  
EURATOM = European Atomic Energy Community  
ENPI = European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument  
GDP = Gross domestic product  
IPA = Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance  
IROP = Integrated Regional Operational Programme  
ISPA = Instrument for Structural Programmes for pre-Accession  
JASPERS = Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions  
MA = Managing Authority  
MC = Monitoring Committees  
MIFF = Multi-annual Indicative Financial Framework  
NSRF = National Strategic Reference Framework  
OPs = Operational programmes  
PCM = Project Cycle Management  
PHARE = Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring Economies Programme  
SAPARD = Support for Pre-accession Measures for Agriculture and Rural Development  
SME = Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

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**Juan Lirón Lago** was, from 1985 until 2008, an official of the public administration of the Xunta of Galicia, where he worked as Deputy Director for Economic Planning in the department of economics of the Xunta of Galicia. A graduate in Economics from the University of Santiago de Compostela, he has an advanced studies diploma in European Economic Integration. Author of many works on economic planning and regional policy, he lectured from 1989 to 1998 at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

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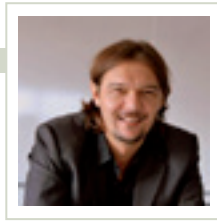
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**Albert Sorrosal** is a consultant specialising in technical aid for European funded programmes and projects. He is currently working for EUROPEAID as a management, audit and control expert, in support of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes (ENPI-CBC). He is currently also assisting several projects financed by the European Territorial Cooperation Objective. For the last 12 years he has been working as a consultant on financial and auditing issues in projects financed under programmes such as INTERREG, RECITE II, LIFE III, ERDF, EQUAL, Cohesion Funds, URBAN and Cultura 2000. He has also been working on technical assistance contracts for DG REGIO and DG ENVIRONMENT.

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*Dr. Andrea Noferini*  
Scientific coordinator

## Introduction

Cohesion policy aims to reinforce economic and social cohesion by redressing the main regional imbalances via support for the development of regional economies. The way in which Cohesion policy programmes are designed and managed fosters partnership between different levels of government, between public and private players, and between government and non-government bodies. This approach contributes to the development of a multi-level decision-making environment which, when properly managed, leads to economic and social development. Nevertheless, the management of Cohesion policy is not costless. This is particularly true for those governments and public administrations which are not familiar with structural fund regulation nor public procurement, strategic approach, programming activities or sound financial management.

As the enlargement process continues, financial assistance to candidate and potential candidate countries is becoming even more crucial. On the basis of the lessons learnt in the past, the European Commission (EC) has rationalised financial assistance to these countries into a common instrument that very much resembles structural funds management: the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). By gaining first-hand experience at running these programmes today - the EC says - these countries will be well placed to absorb future structural funds once they become available to them.

This manual is intended as an information and user guide on EU Cohesion policy for candidate and potential candidate countries. The target audience is primarily public administration staff and officials in the Western Balkans and Turkey managing structural funds and/or seeking to access the EU structural funds programmes. It can also act as a training tool for officials who are new to structural funds and for other parties that have a role or an interest in Cohesion policy.

The manual provides basic information on the principle aspects of 2007-2013 Cohesion policy such as structural fund regulation, budgetary allocation, financial instruments, programmes and objectives, with a special emphasis on IPA. In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions and to keep the text focused, the manual only outlines the main EU institutional information on Cohesion policy. Further information and some useful links to main EU official websites and documents on Cohesion policy are presented in the boxes.

The added value of the manual consists in its comparative perspective, with a special attention to candidate and potential candidate countries. The authors' contributions mainly present a general overview of the Spanish experience in the management of Cohesion policy over the last decades. In addition to this, the experiences of new member states have also been included in order to provide additional information on those neighbourhood countries which joined the EU in 2004. By presenting and comparing the experience of Spain and of new member states, the idea of the manual is to help candidate and potential candidates in facing the challenges of future scenarios (problems, issues and solutions) related to Cohesion policy.

Basically, the manual is divided into four sections. Part 1 - *European Cohesion policy. An overview* - presents the basic facts concerning Cohesion policy according to 2007- 2013 regulation. *Alexander Heichlinger's* contribution expands the terms of reference by presenting the Lisbon strategy and its implication for Cohesion policy. *José Antonio Zamora* offers a clear and interesting view on the present and the future of Cohesion policy by considering the relevance of the latter policy within the EU general architecture. Finally, the last two articles summarise very concisely the general information, objectives and budgetary issues related to 2007-2013 regulation. *Marta Mir Izard's* contribution focuses on EU regulation principles and the role of a strategic approach within Cohesion policy. In contrast, *Andrea Noferini's* article introduces the Instrument for Pre-Accession for candidate and potential candidate countries by describing the main framework and the conditions for eligibility.

Part 2 - *Experiences and Instruments. The Spanish Case* - and Part 3 of the manual - *Experiences and Instruments. Voices from new member states* - constitute the core of the present manual. They bring together information, experiences and instruments from old and new member states that have already had to deal with the management of Cohesion policy.

Part two examines the main findings from Spain's two decades of membership and implementation of Cohesion policy. During this period, the management and implementation of structural funds have not only contributed to the socioeconomic development of the country, but have also prompted significant organisational and institutional changes within public administrations in Spain. *Francesc Morata* and *Lucia Popartan's* contribution approaches this last point by examining the Europeanisation of Spanish regional policy and the application of the partnership principle over the different financial periods. *Carlos Tortuero* then schematically presents the main points of the European Social Funds and their application in Spain. Finally, the last three articles shift the focus from the national to the sub-national level by describing how regional, intermediate and local governments can be involved in the Cohesion policy process. Firstly, *Juan Lirón* describes the learning process which Galicia has undergone in the ma-

agement of structural funds. Secondly, *Emma de Abuin* focuses on the specific case of cross-border cooperation between Catalonia - one of Spain's most active Autonomous Communities - and its neighbouring regions. Finally, *Octavi de la Varga's* contribution shows how local entities can profit from networks established and promoted by the EU.

Part 3 reports some experiences regarding those new member states that have only recently joined the EU, and how the implementation of pre-accession or structural funds has worked in their territories. Many of the problems and difficulties encountered by these newcomers are likely to be repeated for candidate and potential candidate countries. Therefore, *Iwona Karwot's* contribution relates the implementation of Cohesion policy in Poland - the biggest recipient country from the group of new member states - in the period 2004-06. Secondly, *Andrew Cartwright* provides a very interesting overview on the functioning of the monitoring committees in Hungary, Slovakia and Austria. Finally, *Daniele Del Bianco* presents the results of a case-study in cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia by applying a stimulating SWOT analysis applied to cross-border co-operation.

Part 4 of the manual - *Project Management and Technical Aspects of Cohesion policy* - discusses in some detail the technical aspects and the project management of EU funded projects. The principal goal here is to provide the reader with useful and practical information. *Albert Sorrosal* offers some hints and tips on the main elements to be taken into account both at programme and project level in structural funds management. *Hugo Ruiz Taboada's* contribution shifts the debate onto a more specific level by describing the procurement procedures corresponding to the Instrument of Pre-Accession for candidate and potential candidates countries, and comparing them with standard structural fund regulation for member states. *Stephanie Horel*, in contrast, sets the scene for the development, preparation and implementation of EU funded projects, with a detailed road-map of the unavoidable steps required for presenting a project within the Cohesion policy framework. Finally, *Victoria Planas* closes Part 4 of the manual by providing some practical information on the project management cycle and the logical framework approach.