



Funded by
the European Union



LIVING-IN.EU

Living life the European way.
Where digitalization makes your life easier
and brings us into balance with nature.

Join us in creating our future.



LIVING-IN.EU | **GO-LI.EU**





Funded by
the European Union

Digital transformation in the next EU budget: What is changing for cities and regions?

JOIN, BOOST, SUSTAIN

Wednesday 19 November 2025, 10:30-11:30 CET

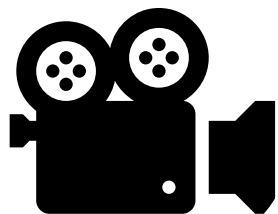
Co-organised by the Living-in.EU Financial WG and the Eurocities Digital Forum

LIVING-IN.EU | **GO-LI.EU**

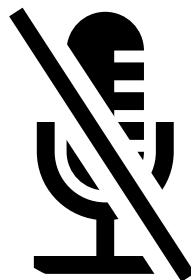




Housekeeping rules



Please note that this session will be recorded: We kindly ask you to turn off your camera if you object to being recorded.



To avoid background noises, please mute your microphone during the session.



To ask questions during the Q&A session, please raise your hand, or type your question in the meeting chat.



Agenda

10:30-10:35 | **Welcome and introduction**

10:35-10:45 | **Digital transformation in the next EU budget**

(Chiara Venturini, Head of Digital Transformation and Economic Development, Eurocities)

Leveraging the power of cities and regions to engage with national authorities on funding

10:45-10:55 | City of Ghent: **Sarah Delputte**, International Relations officer

10:55-11:05 | Emilia-Romagna Region: **Caterina Brancaleoni**, Head of Sector for European Policies and Funds

11:05-11:15 | City of Espoo: **Piia Wollstén**, Director for Digital Services Development

11:15-11:25 | **Interactive discussion: Cities' and regions' needs and concerns regarding the current budget proposal**

11:25-11:30 | **Next steps**



Funded by
the European Union

Living-in.EU Financial WG: What is it about?

Explore topics such as:

- Available EU funding
- Joint investment plans
- Synergies between EU, national and local funds
- Reinforcement of investments
- Common public procurement practices





Funded by
the European Union

Interactive tour de table



Join at
slido.com
#2470 938

[https://app.sli.do/event/
2ktbPd87uPdmKhC4521
FTe](https://app.sli.do/event/2ktbPd87uPdmKhC4521FTe)



Funded by
the European Union

Digital transformation in the next EU budget

Chiara Venturini

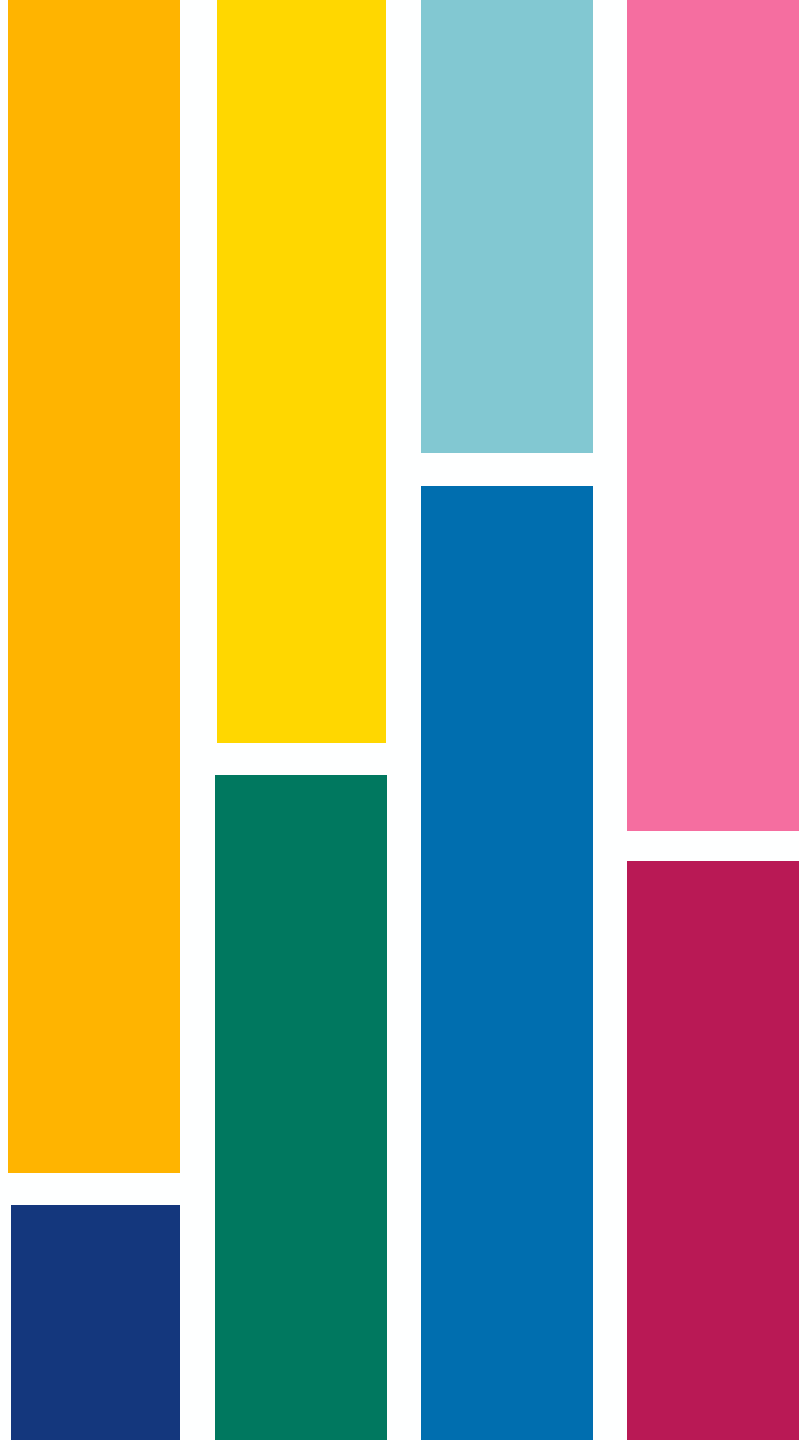
Head of Digital Transformation and Economic Development

Eurocities

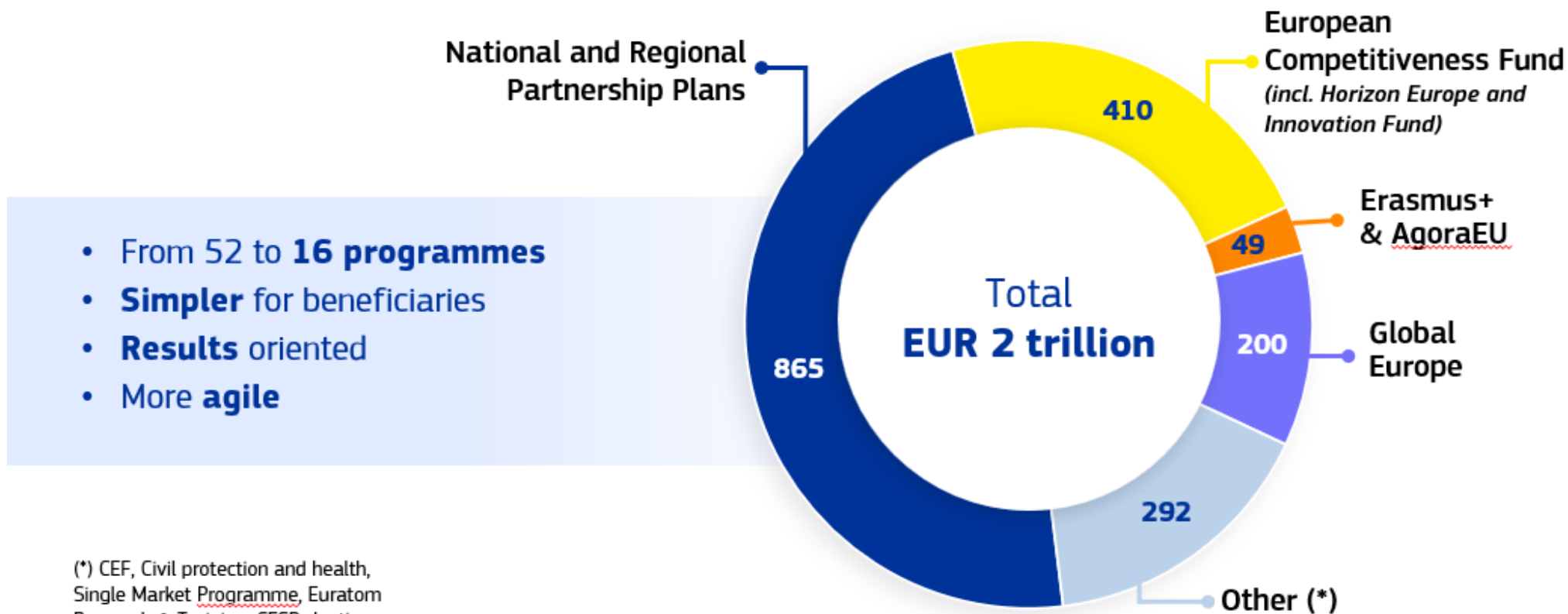
Digital in the next MFF

Living-in.EU webinar

19 November 2025



The 2028-2034 MFF at a glance

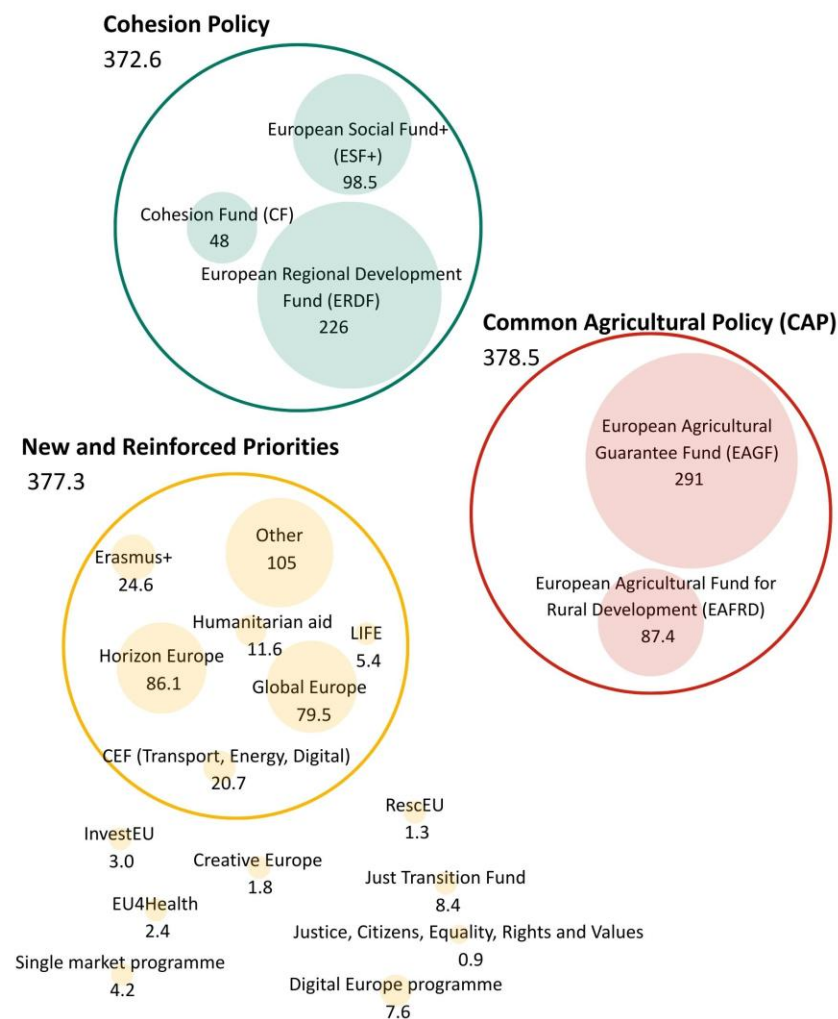


(*) CEF, Civil protection and health, Single Market Programme, Euratom Research & Training, CFSP, Justice, Nuclear Decommissioning, OCT, Pericles.
Excludes NextGenerationEU repayment

All amounts in EUR, current prices

Proposed structure

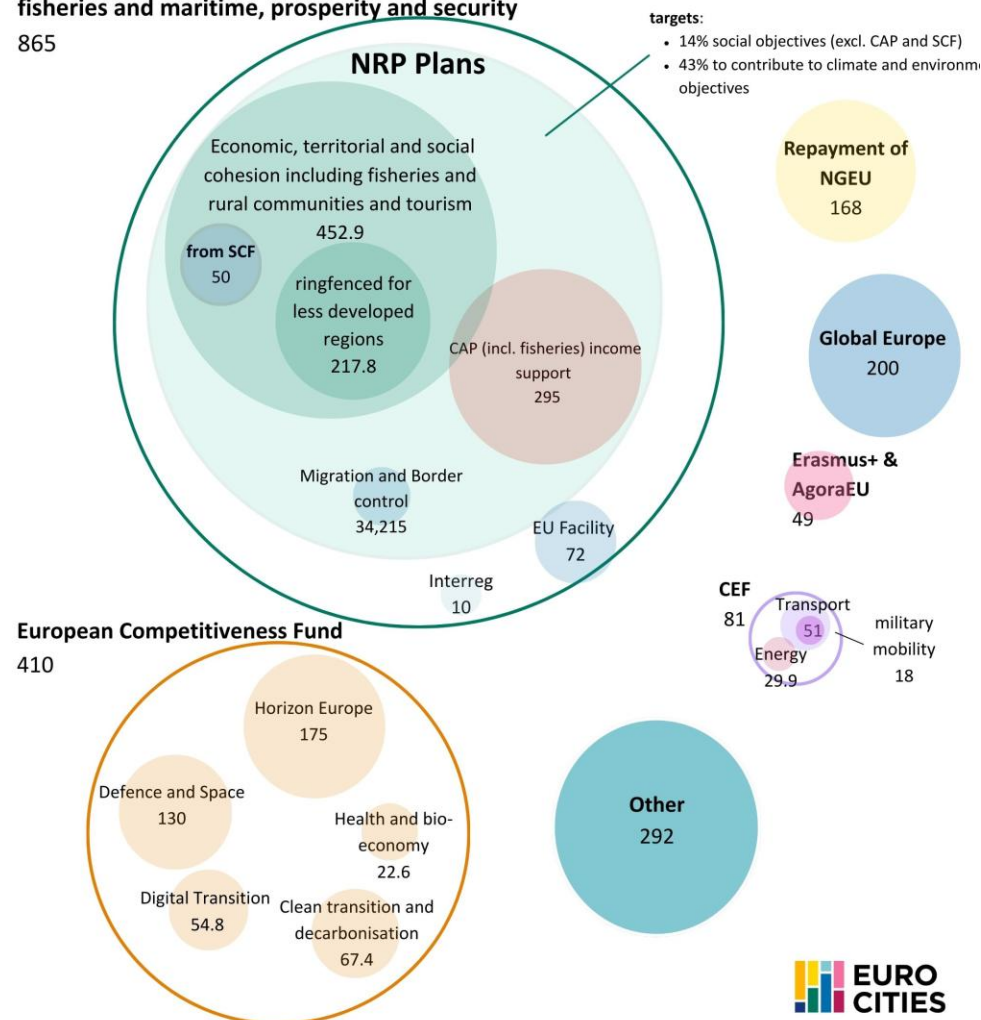
2021-2027



2028-2034

European Fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security

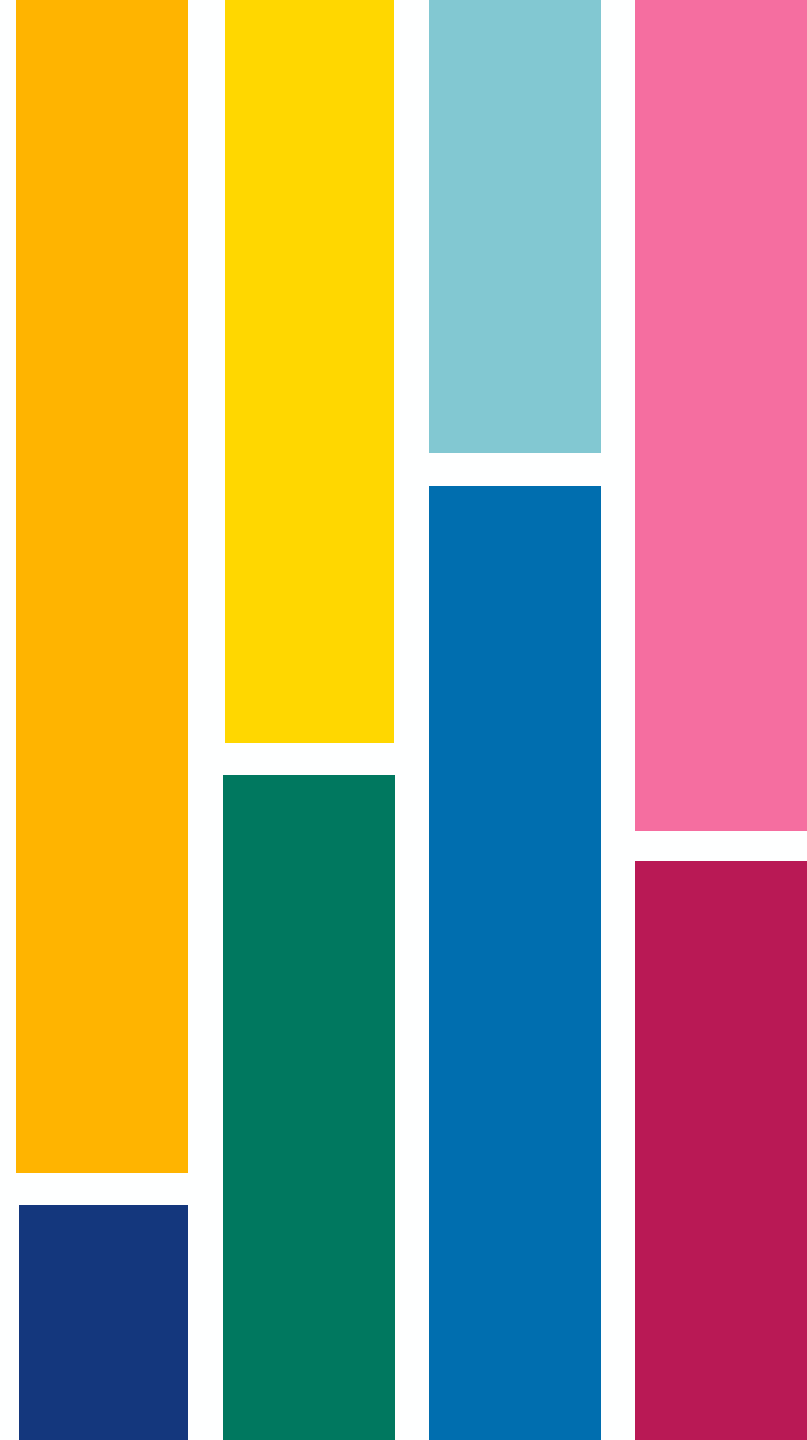
865



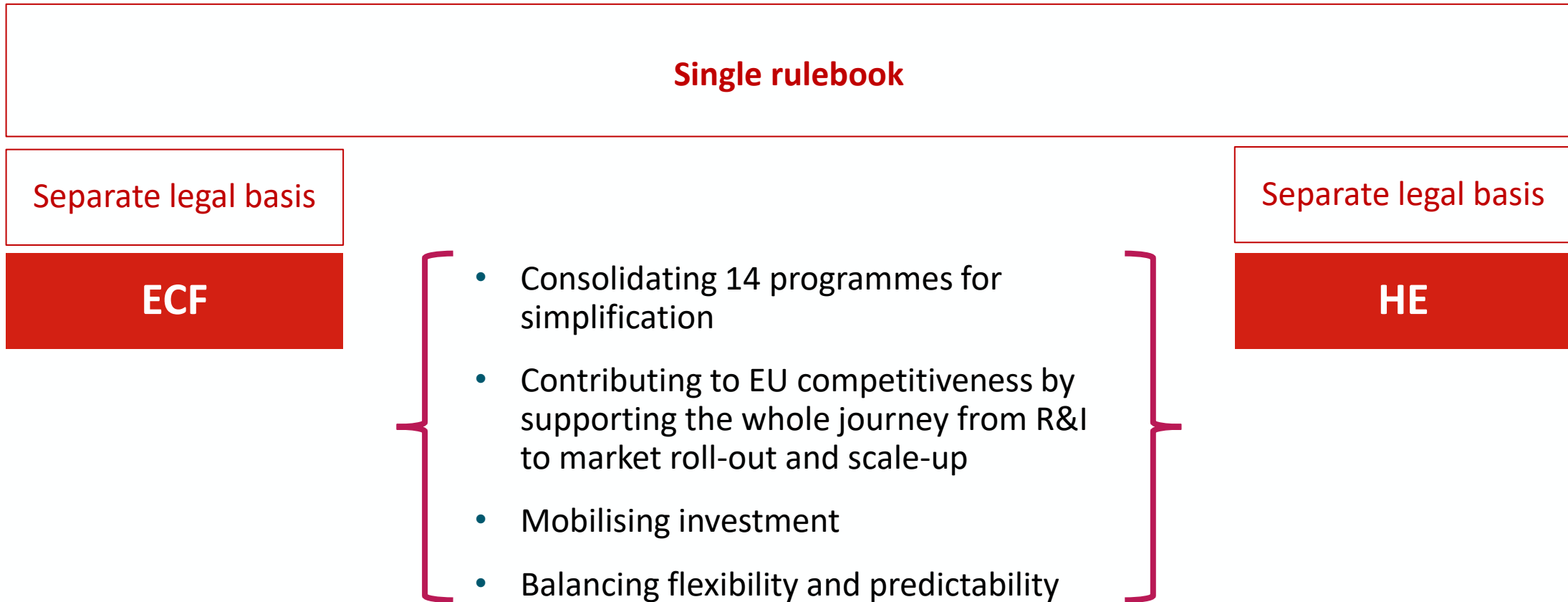
What access to funding for LRAs?

- **Cohesion Policy** to be merged into the new “Fund”, shaped by National and Regional Partnerships Plans (NRPPs): Member States have the option, but not the obligation, to include regional/territorial chapters in their NRPPs
- LRAs retain access to **sectoral programmes**: ECF, Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Interreg, CEF, Agora Europe...
- For cities, the European Urban Initiative could continue under the **EU Facility** as part of the budget line “others” which also covers social innovation and employment (€11bn in total)

European Competitiveness Fund and Horizon Europe



Interplay between ECF and HE



Synergies

HE

ECF

Four policy windows

- Clean transition and industrial decarbonisation
- Health, biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy
- **Digital leadership**
- Resilience and security, defence industry and space

- Pillar I – Excellent science
- Pillar II – **Competitiveness** and Society
- Pillar III – Innovation
- Pillar IV – European Research Area

The *Digital Leadership* window in the ECF

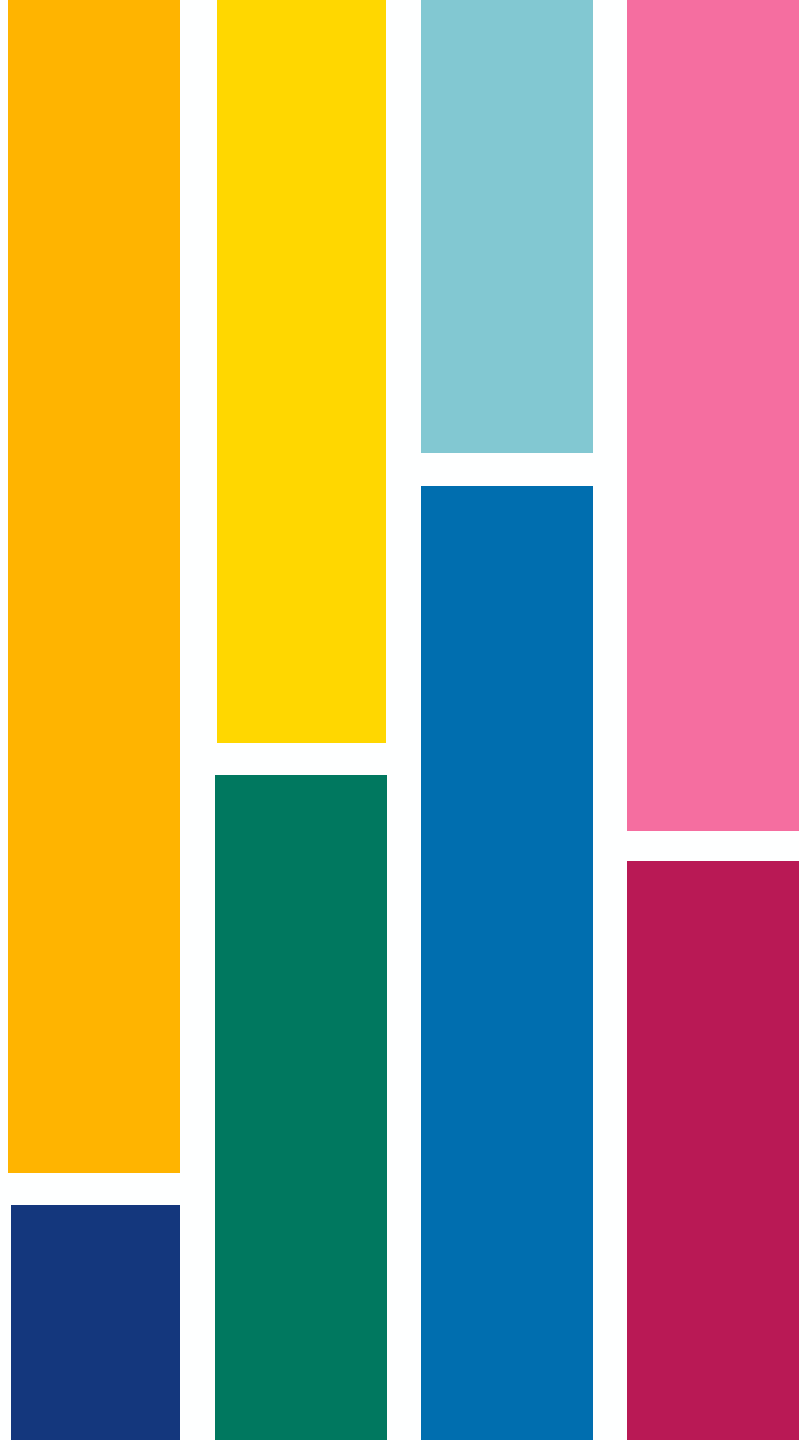
Chapter VI, Articles 38-39

- Artificial intelligence, incl. AI factories and gigafactories
- HPC and quantum technologies
- Semiconductors and photonics
- Robotics
- Large data technologies, telco-edge and cloud technologies
- 6G and other wireless technologies, communication networks, advanced connectivity
- Sensing technologies
- Cybersecurity and network resilience
- Software engineering
- AR and virtual worlds
- Digital Twins, digital identity and business wallets
- Trust technologies
- New and emerging digital technologies + cross-sectoral digital technologies and applications, incl. with dual-use potential
- Support for data technologies and data spaces

Funding rules simplification in Horizon Europe

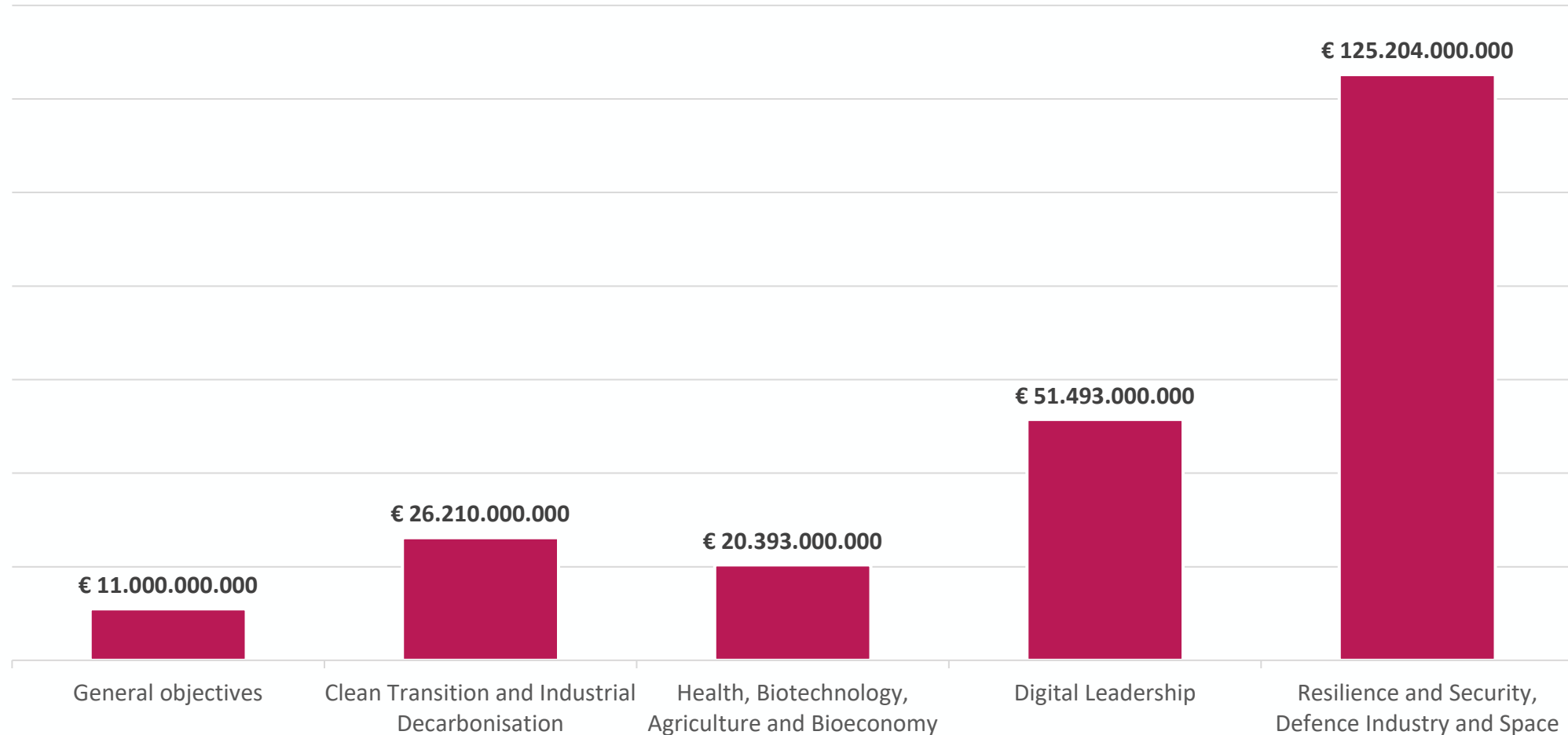
- Overall simplification of access
- Open topics by default
- Lump sum by default, 100% co-funding rate (70% for for-profit entities excluding SMEs)
- No distinction between RIA/IA
- Faster proposal evaluation (5 months) and grant agreement signature (7 months)

Additional slides



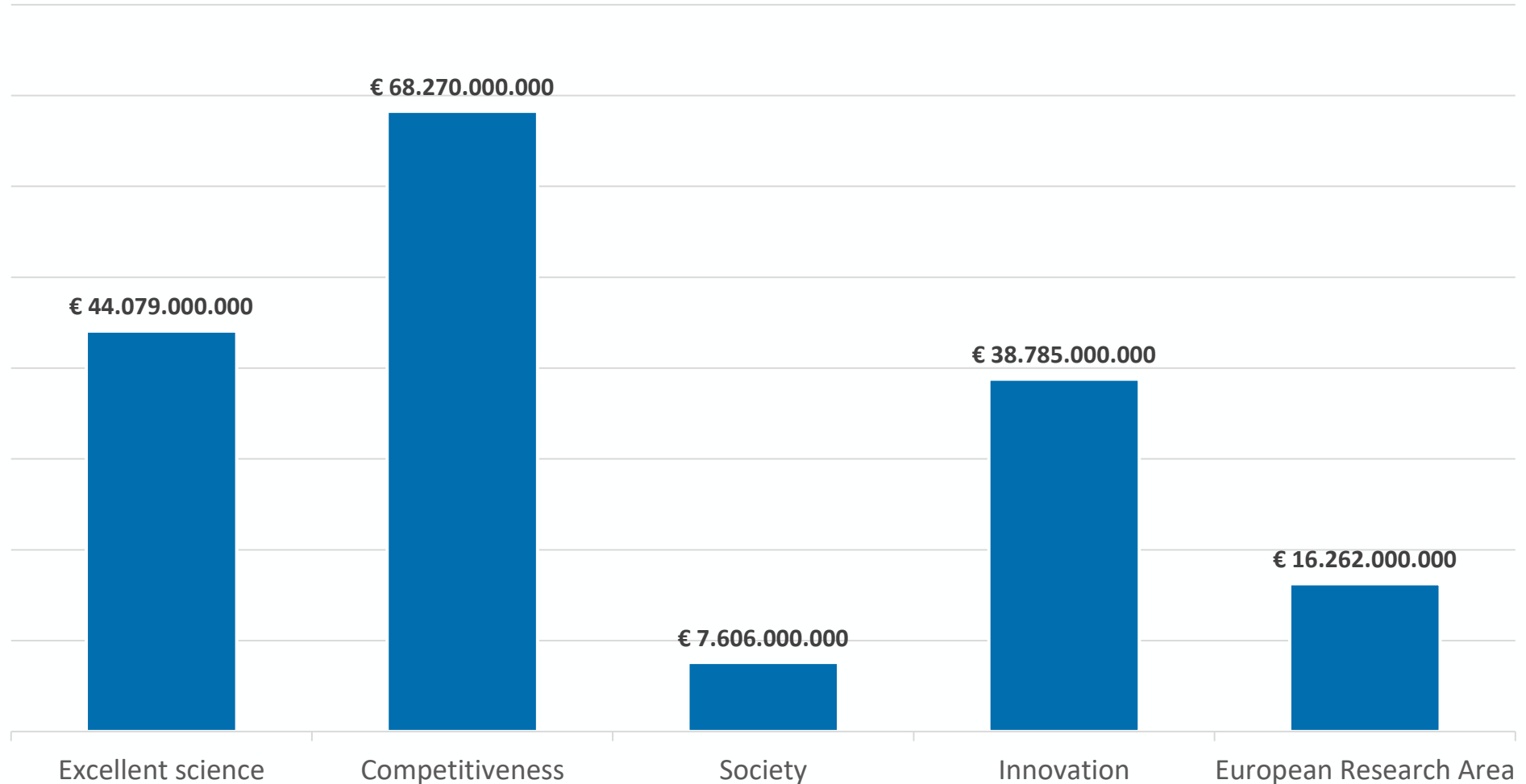
Proposed budget – ECF

Total financial envelope €234,300,000,000



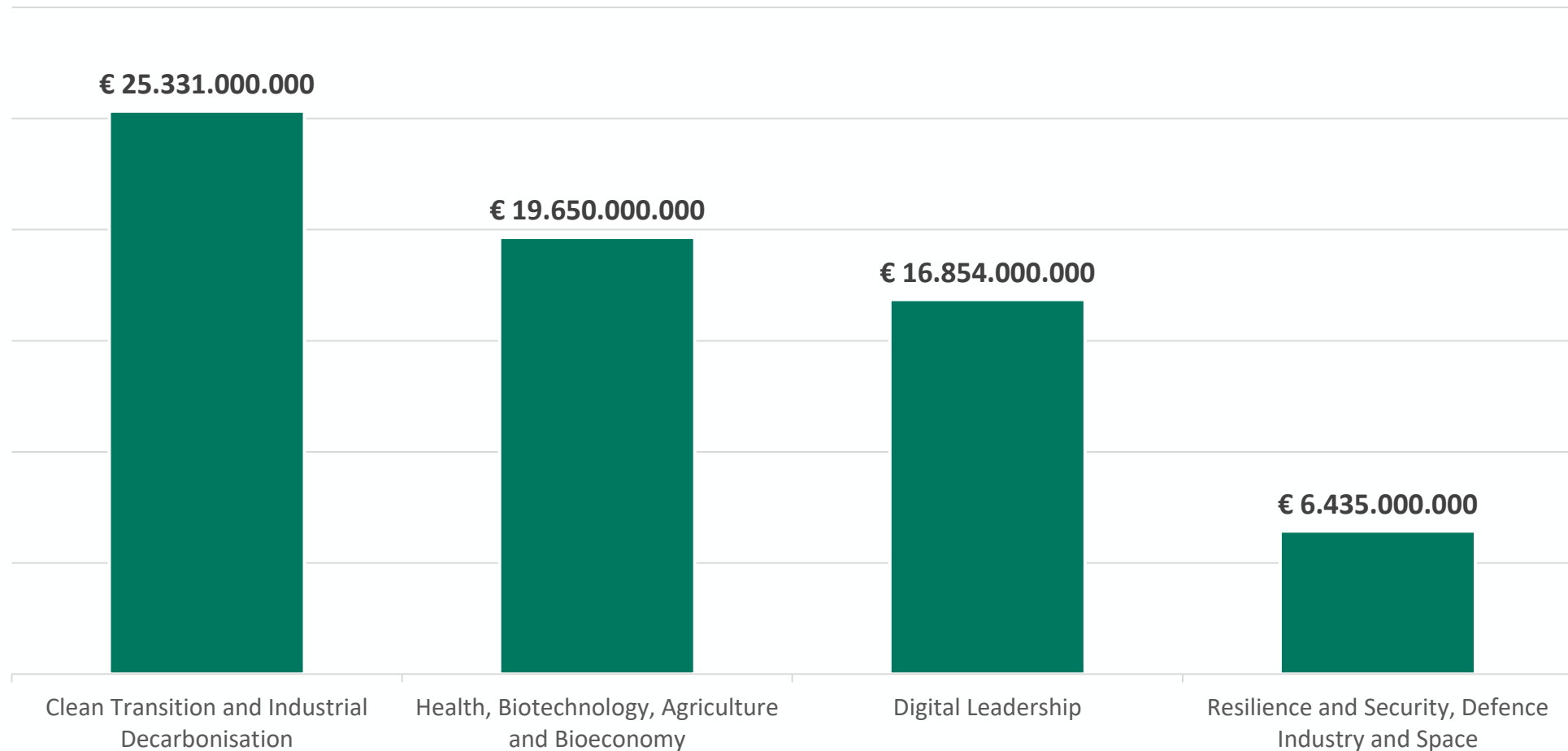
Proposed budget – Horizon Europe (whole)

Total financial envelope €175,002,000,000



Proposed budget – Horizon Europe (Competitiveness)

Total financial envelope €68,270,000,000



Side-by-side

ECF

- Complementing other Competitiveness Compass measures
- Synergies with
 - NRPPs
 - Connecting Europe Facility (cross-border infrastructure for mobility, energy, digital)
 - Innovation Fund, Single Market Programme, Erasmus+ (skills), Global Europe Programme (competitiveness)

HE

- Simplification of funding access
 - Open topics by default
 - Lump sum by default, 100% co-funding rate (70% for for-profit entities excluding SMEs)
 - No distinction between RIA/IA
 - Faster proposal evaluation (5 months) and grant agreement signature (7 months)
- Synergies with
 - ECF (policy windows, JRC direct actions)
 - Competitiveness Coordination Tool

- Four policy windows (open architecture)
- Whole financial toolbox available, incl. budgetary guarantee and financial instruments
- Advisory support
- Open to EFTA-EEA members, acceding/candidate countries, ENP countries, other third countries on the basis of association agreements (restrictions can apply to funding for defence-related activities)

Horizon Europe pillars

Close cooperation between collaborative research (II) and start-up/scale-up support (III) to strengthen the demand side, incl. through procurement			
Pillar I – Excellent science	Pillar II – Competitiveness and society	Pillar III – Innovation	Pillar IV– European Research Area
<i>Research excellence and mobility</i> - European Research Council - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions - JRC direct actions	<i>ECF synergies for competitiveness in areas of high societal impact</i> - Four intervention areas - Bottom-up window for research (migration, disinformation, democracy) - Partnerships, incl. Joint Undertakings	<i>Development of new products/services and business models</i> - European Innovation Council (scope to be expanded) - Innovation ecosystems	<i>Promoting excellence and impact</i> - ERA policy - Research infrastructures (incl. CAPEX) - Widening participation (addressing regional disparities)



Funded by
the European Union

Leveraging the power of Living-in.EU signatories to engage with national authorities on funding

Sarah Delputte

International Relations Officer

City of Ghent



The Belgian Cities Initiative on the MFF 2028–2034

Living-in.EU Financial WG webinar – 19 November 2025

Sarah Delputte & Isabelle Sioen - City of Ghent

Why a joint Belgian approach?

We started locally, but quickly realised the strength of speaking nationally

- Summer 2025: Belgian Prime Minister's letter to President von der Leyen setting out **national MFF priorities**
 - **Urban dimension** was **missing**
- 13 Flemish central cities decided to act **together** through the Knowledge Centre of Flemish Cities
 - Joint response to strengthen the **cities' voice** in the national negotiation position
 - Meeting with PM's cabinet: encouraged to coordinate towards Belgian cities' message
- Evolved into a **Belgian-wide initiative** engaging also Brussels and major Walloon cities
 - One voice across regions, languages and political families

Core messages of the Belgian cities' position

Belgian cities as constructive allies

- We presented Belgian cities as **constructive allies** of the federal and regional governments: cities as co-implementers of European and national ambitions.
- **Core narrative**
 - Cities make EU and national priorities tangible: competitiveness, sustainability, inclusion, security
 - They provide the enabling conditions that make transition possible: housing, mobility, skills, energy planning
 - EU investment helps cities accelerate and scale up local action
 - We ask not for “more funds,” but for **stronger governance, a mandatory Urban Chapter and urban earmarking** within national plans.

How we worked together

Coordination & partners

- Lead coordination: City of Ghent + Knowledge Centre of Flemish Cities
- Endorsing cities:
 - 13 Flemish central cities
 - City of Brussels
 - 7 major Walloon cities (Liège, Namur, Charleroi, Mons, La Louvière, Tournai, Eupen)
- Process:
 - Drafted by Knowledge Centre of Flemish Cities and City of Ghent
 - Based on input from the 13 Flemish “centrumsteden”
 - Then presented to Brussels and main Walloon cities for endorsement
 - Aim: efficiency and coherence at national level
 - Experience: limited administrative capacity in most cities, no demand for co-drafting
 - Text kept broad and strategic, not focused on local interests

Result: one joint statement delivered to the Prime Minister on 12 October 2025

Next steps

At Belgian level

- Follow-up with Prime Minister's office and regional governments
- Share the Belgian cities' statement with key EU stakeholders (Permanent Representations, regional government, MEPs, Commissioner Lahbib)
- Set up of smaller national city taskforce for quick & efficient engagement in coming months/years: Ghent, Leuven, Roeselare, Brussels (tbc), Liège (tbc) + ... (tbc)

At Ghent level

- Build strategic alliances with key local stakeholders to strengthen advocacy:
 - First concrete step: exchange with **North Sea Port**
 - ...

Lessons learned & challenges

- Lessons learned
 - Efficiency first: small drafting group => faster consensus
 - Broad framing helps to build unity
 - Expertise thanks to Eurocities membership is key
 - Coordination structure between cities is extremely helpful (Flemish cities >< Walloon cities)
 - Political timing is key
- Challenges ahead
 - Long and unpredictable MFF negotiation timeline
 - Limited insight into intermediate deadlines or national positions
 - Keeping all partners engaged over time?
 - Administrative capacity gaps across cities
 - Balancing unity with local diverse interests when negotiations become more concrete?



Funded by
the European Union

Leveraging the power of Living-in.EU signatories to engage with national authorities on funding

Caterina Brancaleoni

Head of Sector for European Policies and Funds

Emilia-Romagna Region



**Leveraging the power of Regions to engage with
national authorities on funding:
the PERSPECTIVE and EXPERIENCE of
the EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION**

Caterina Brancaleoni

HEAD OF SECTOR FOR EUROPEAN POLICIES AND FUNDS – EMILIA-ROMAGNA

Emilia-Romagna in a nutshell

ACCORDING TO EU COHESION POLICY
E-RR RANKS AMONG THE MOST DEVELOPED REGIONS

POPULATION: 4.482.977 (+ 0,3 % in 2025)

SURFACE: 22.509,67 sq km

AVERAGE DENSITY: 199,16

330 MUNICIPALITIES

1 METROPOLITAN AREA (BOLOGNA)

8 COUNTIES

GDP PER HEAD 40.032 euro (EU **34.601 euro**)

Active companies: 432.563 (+ 0,2 % in 2025)

Agricultural businesses: 53.688

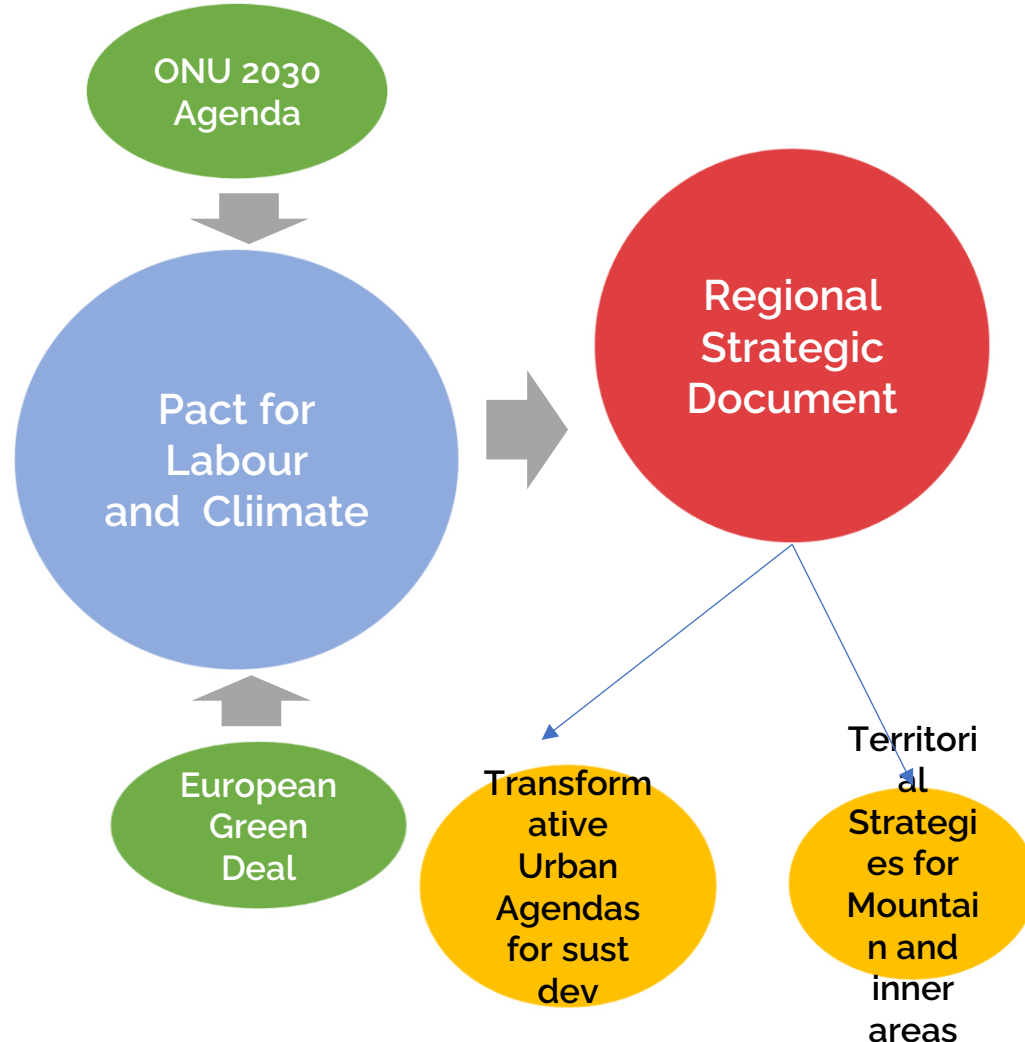
Employment rate: 70,6%

Unemployment rate: 4,3 %

Elderly people rate : 24,7%



REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING



Regional Strategic Document 2021-27:

- outlines the **strategic planning** of European and national funds 2021-2027;
- guides the operational planning of funds **managed by the Region** towards the strategic objectives of the Pact for Work and Climate;
- addresses the issue of the regional system's **capacity to attract additional resources** by expanding the mix of policies for sustainable development;
- provides for **integrated territorial strategies (ATUSS and STAMI)** through co-design with local authorities and stakeholders to achieve common objectives..

EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL RESOURCES 2021-2027 for Strategic Territorial Planning

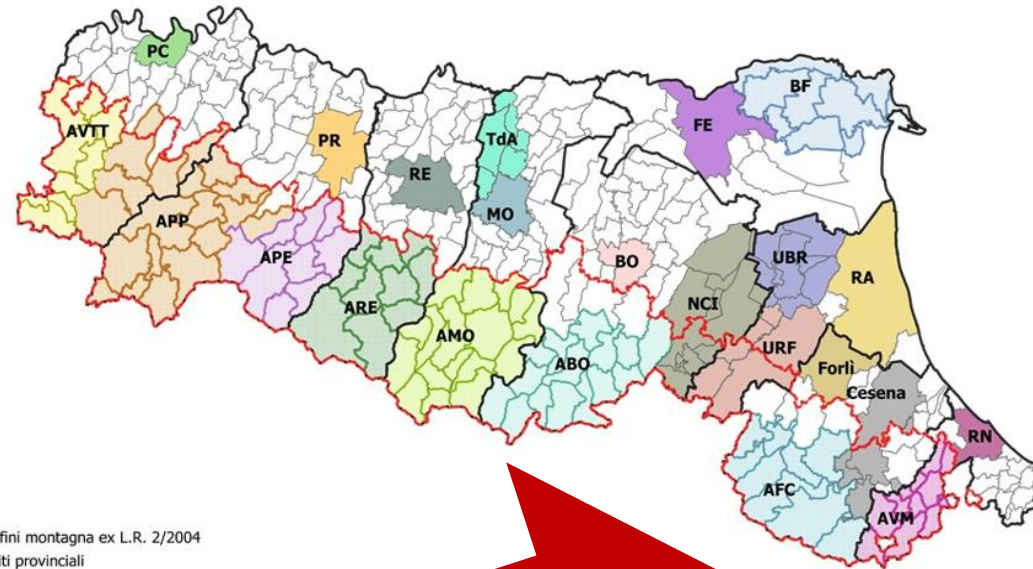
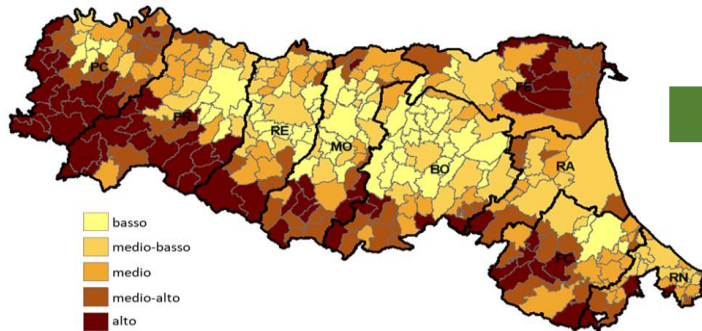
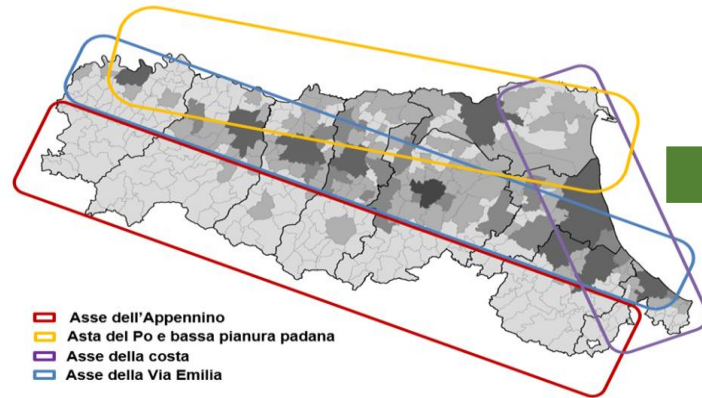
PACT FOR WORK AND CLIMATE	ERDF	ESF	CF	EARFD EMFAR	REACT EU	NRRP	ETC	EC Funds	Regular Funds
Emilia-Romagna, a region of knowledge and know-how: Investing in education, training, research and culture: not to suffer change but to determine it; to generate quality jobs and reduce precariousness and inequality ; to innovate the manufacturing and service sectors; to accelerate the ecological and DIGITAL TRANSITION .									
Emilia-Romagna, a region that fosters environmental transition: accelerating the green transition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and switch to clean and renewable energies by 2035; combine productivity, equity and sustainability, generating new quality jobs.									
Emilia-Romagna, a region of rights and duties: tackling economic, social, gender and generational/territorial inequalities that weaken cohesion and prevent fair and sustainable development.									
Emilia-Romagna, a region of work, entrepreneurship and opportunity: designing a young and open European region that invests in quality and innovation, beauty and sustainability to attract businesses and talent, supporting local vocations and adding new value to production and services.									
Digital Transition - Pact for Simplification - Legality and Participation									

DATA DRIVEN POLICY: TACKLING TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES

INTEGRATED TERRITORIALE STRATEGIES:

ATUSS (**U**rban transformati agendas for sustainable development)

STAMI (Territorial strategies for **m**ountainous and **i**nland areas)



* At least 10% of each program (ERDF, ESF+, EAFRD, DCF) to mountainous and inland areas for development actions

Projects designed to transform the territory addressing territorial and demographic imbalances within the region, supporting the increase in services to people, and **designing sustainable urban spaces: ATUSS**

14 Cities and local intermediate systems

42 Municipalities

4.950 km²

(aprox 22% of total surface area)

2.148.045 inhabitants

(aprox 48% of total regional population)

110 projects

166 mln (ERDF – ESF+ - CF - COF)



AREAS OF INTERVENTION:

- Transformative innovation
- Digital transition

- Ecological transition and circular economy
 - Culture of sustainability
 - Urban regeneration

❖ Projects to address new social risks



- Integrated projects for culture and creative industries, tourism and trade

Projects designed to transform the territory
addressing territorial and demographic imbalances within the region, supporting the increase in services to local communities, and designing sustainable development: **STAMI**

9 inner and mountain areas

108 Municipalities & 19 Unions of municipalities

8.664 km² (aprox 38% of total surface area)

379.264 inhabitants
(aprox 8,5% of total regional population)

193 projects

111 mln (ERDF – ESF+ - CF - SNAI - COFIN)



AREAS OF INTERVENTION:

➤ **Digital transition**

❑ **Technical assistance**



▪ **Energy upgrading of sports facilities, buildings and community spaces**

❖ **Projects to address new social risks**

○ **Integrated projects for supporting culture heritage and sustainable tourism**

Territorial strategies: ATUSS and STAMI

National and regional programs are not always able to pay sufficient attention to the different “capacities” of local territories.

One-size-fits-all approach vs place-based approach

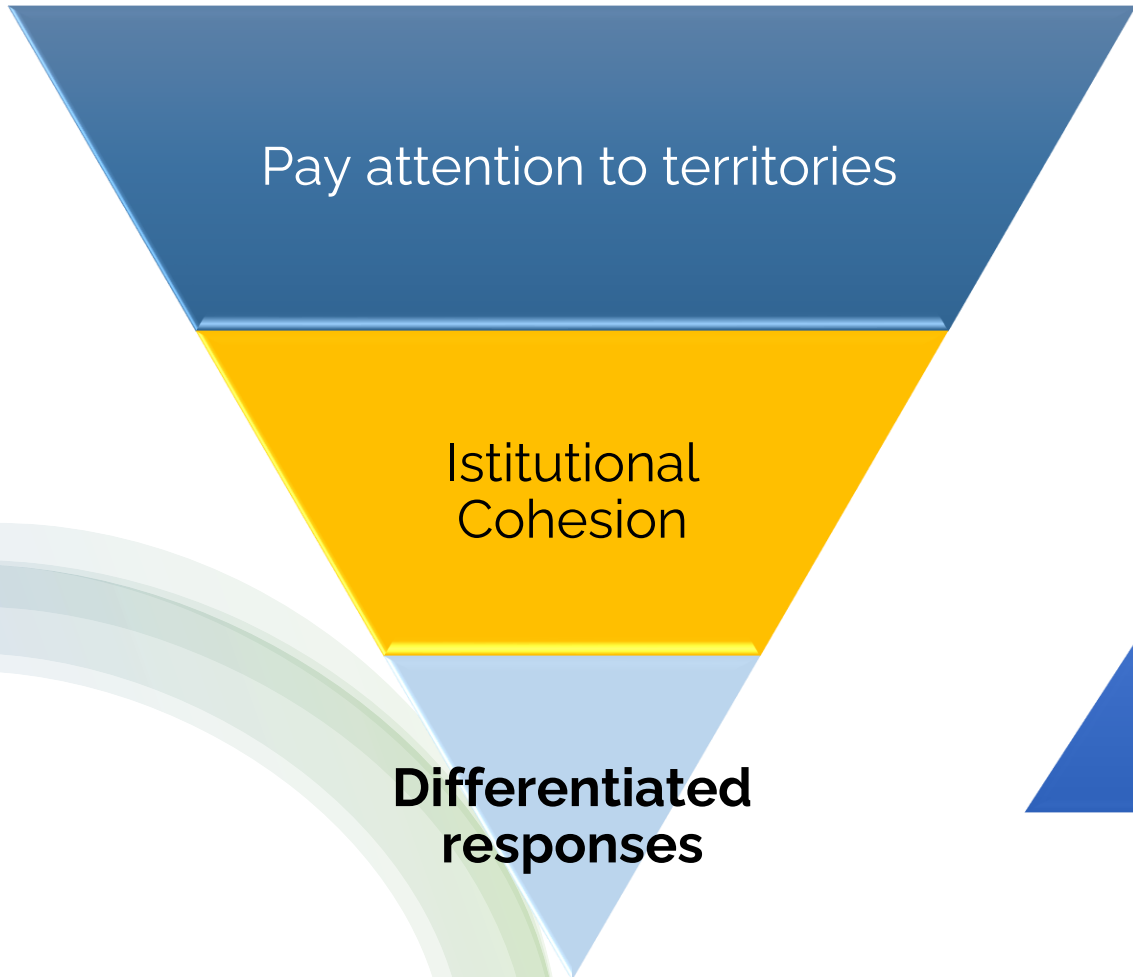
The first is more functional in terms of spending speed.
The second enhances the policy of territorial development and multilevel governance



How can we guarantee more structural effects & impacts?

Integrated territorial strategies: PERSPECTIVES

Regional point of view



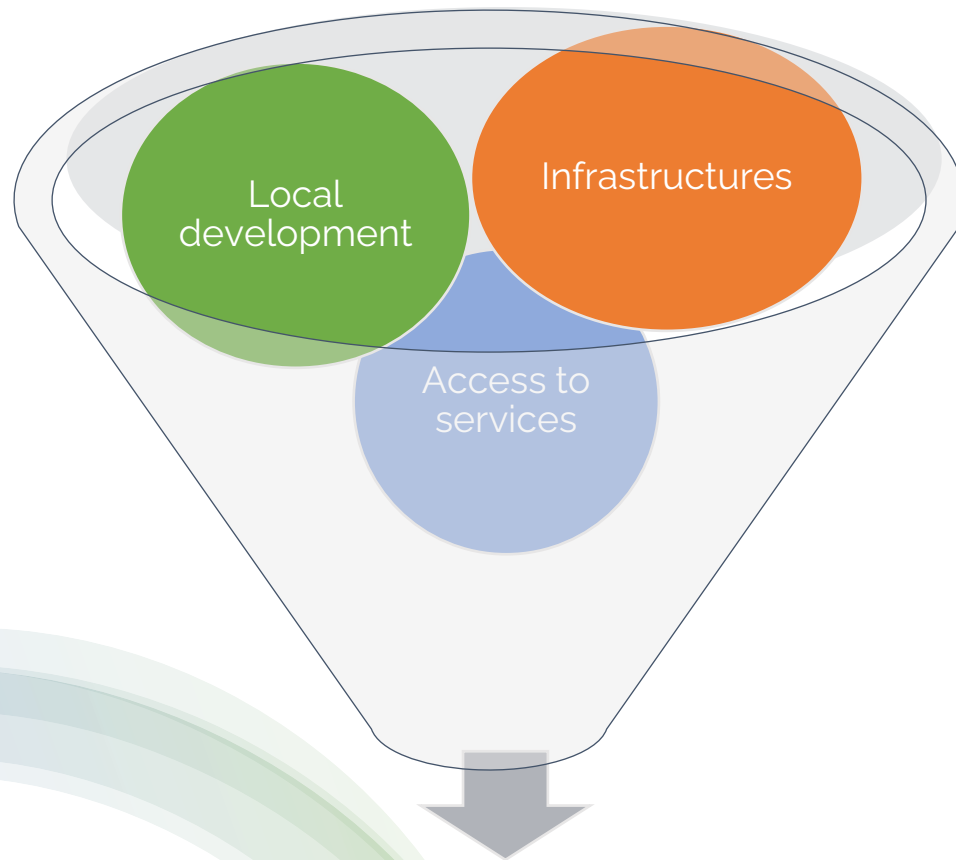
Voice to territories

Strategies and flexibility

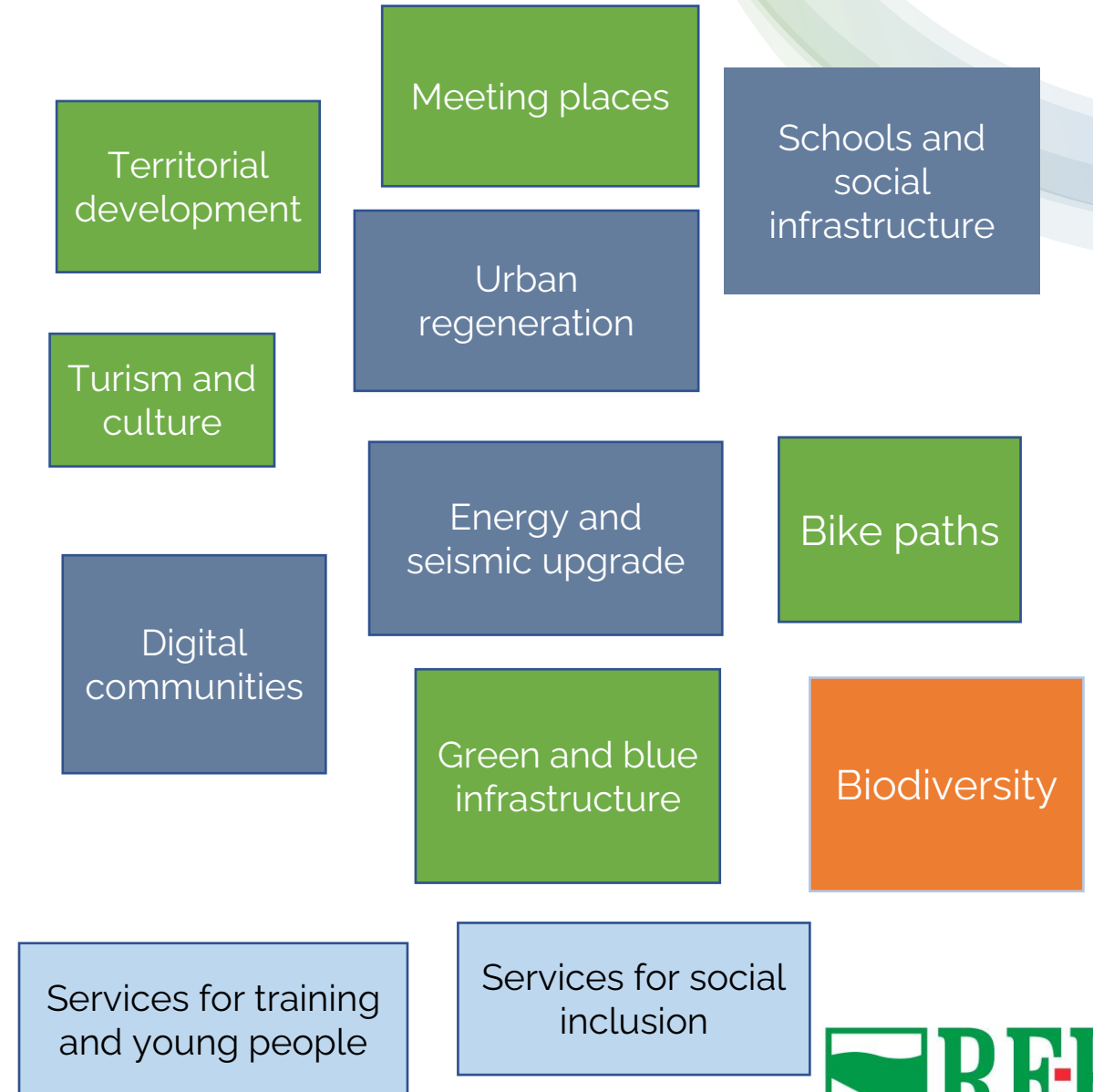
Legitimacy and empowerment

Territorial point of view

Territorial strategies: ACTIONS and THEMES



**Integrated territorial
development**



Territorial strategies: AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT

THE VALUE OF TERRITORIES FOR CHANGE

Climate change: **FOSTER** sustainable development

SUPPORT social and demographic transformations

ENHANCE local capabilities by taking strengths into account

PROMOTE Public/private partnership (civil society, economic system, knowledge and learning system)

THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE: *BEST PRACTISES* EMERGED FROM STRETEGIES

DEVELOP the institutional capacity of the entire administrative chain

CO-DESIGN with local authorities and stakeholders for strategic objectives and tangible results

REDUCE bureaucratic burdens

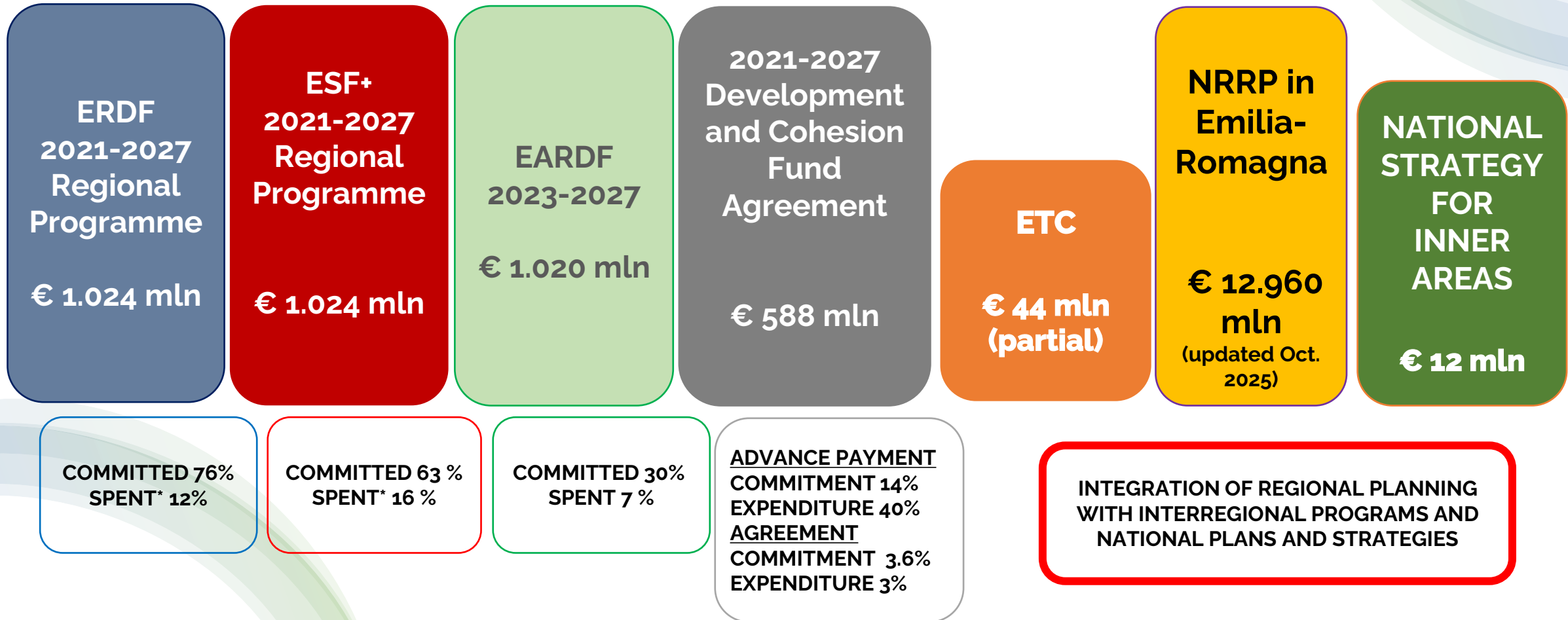
CONSIDER new financial instruments that amplify financial resources

ADOPT/INTEGRATE participatory processes in the planning and implementation phases

HOW the Emilia-Romagna Region involves National Authorities in financing local strategies



2021-2027 MULTI-FUNDS PLANNING IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION



PSNAI 2025 – NATIONAL STRATEGY PLAN FOR INNER AREAS for 2021-27 cycle

Additional resources for inner areas

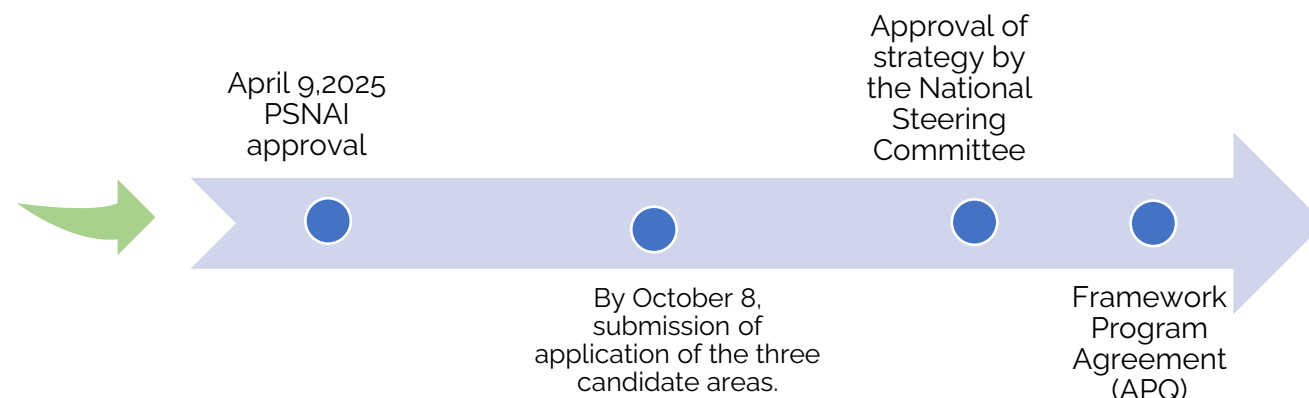
9th of April 2025 approval of National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas.

The Plan identifies areas for action and strategic priorities, with reference to **education, mobility, and social and health services**, to which **12 mln euros** of national resources are allocated.

Up to 5% may be allocated to technical assistance and administrative capacity building.

Emilia-Romagna has applied for **3** additional inner areas for 2021-27 (*App. Forlivese-Cesenate, App. Parma est, App. Modenese*), in addition to the 4 pilot areas from the 2014-20 SNAI funding cycle. **Each new areas** will receive **4 mln euros**.

Roadmap to the Program Agreement Framework





How has DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION been embedded in our territorial strategies?



Digital transformation involves change in institutions, businesses, and the regional system as a whole.

Projects, investments, and actions have been selected and supported for their potential to make a **tangible contribution to removing the obstacles** (i.e. *digital divide*) that cause our territories to fall behind other European regions

To this end, ERDF resources have been used in conjunction with the interventions of the NRRP, Mission 1 "Digitization, Innovation, Competitiveness, and Culture" (M1C1-l1.04/l1.07)

OVERVIEW of DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS in the regional territorial strategies

14 CITIES and local intermediate systems
(4 Unions of municipalities)

3 INNER AND MOUNTAIN AREAS
(2 Unions of Mountain Municipalities)

2.148.045 urban inhabitants
50.126* inland inhabitants
(aprox 49 % of total regional population)

18 PROJECTS

5.480.000 (Atuss) + 2.391.000 (Stami)
= **7.871.500 mln €** (ERDF)



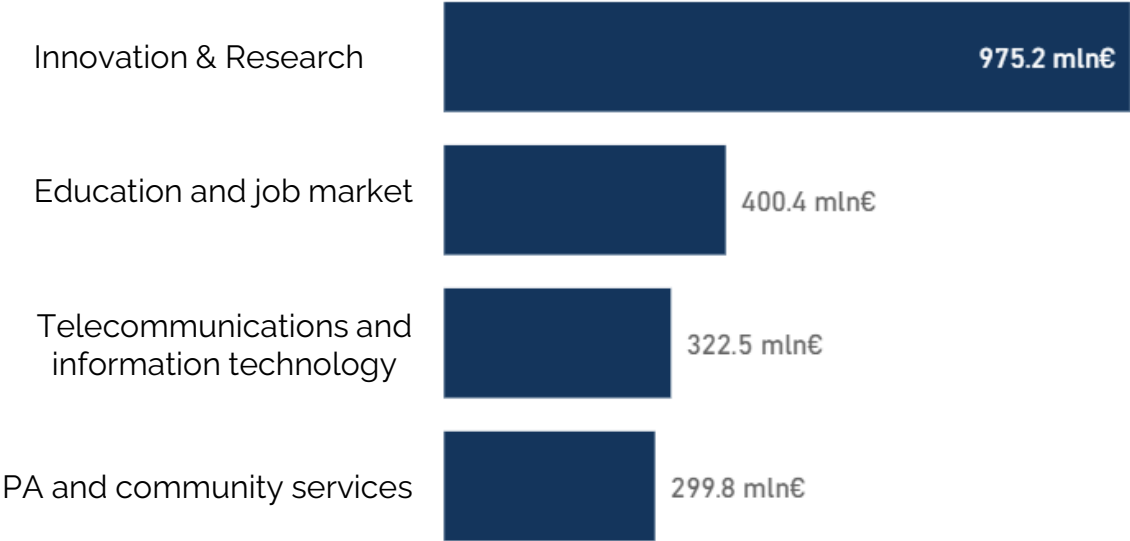
AREAS OF INTERVENTION:

- Digital training of **HUMAN CAPITAL**
 - ❑ Increase and Improvement of **CONNECTIVITY**
 - ❖ Widespread **INTEGRATION** of **DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**
 - Development and Implementation of **DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES**

ATUSS AREA	STRATEGY TITLE	DIGITAL PROJECT TITLE	TOTAL RESOURCES
Municipality of BOLOGNA	Bologna City of knowledge and inclusion	OPEN LABORATORIES	437.500 €
Municipalities of CESENA, MERCATO SARACENO, SARSINA and MONTIANO	CESENA 2030 and the intermediate territorial system of the municipalities of Mercato Saraceno, Sarsina and Montiano	OpenLab: digital technology meets the suburbs	350.000 €
Municipality of FERRARA	LOOK-UP. Shared urbanisation and sustainable transition	LabAperto_MoreThanLab. Transformative platform for the city of Ferrara	437.500 €
Municipality of FORLÌ	Forlì growing, sustainable and inclusive	Forlì Digital Community	437.500 €
Municipality of MODENA	Modena 2050, the future is now	Modena Open Laboratory: strengthening activities for digital facilitation and the construction of digital communities	437.500 €
NUOVO CIRCONDARIO IMOLESE (BO)	Nuovo Circondario Imolese: a More Attractive Territory, a More Sustainable Future	NCI open laboratory	280.000 €
Municipality of PIACENZA	Grow Redevelopment for urban Opportunity and Wealth	Strengthening innovation in the digital transition (" Open Laboratory ")	400.000 €
Municipality of PARMA	Parma 2030: green and smart, for everyone	Parma Open Laboratory	437.500 €
Municipality of RAVENNA	Ravenna 2030 – a city promoting the health and wellbeing of its citizens	Digital unite: paths to digital inclusion	250.000 €
Municipality of REGGIO EMILIA	RE-2030	Collaborative neighborhoods. Towards social justice and digital citizenship	350.000 €
Municipality of RIMINI	Rimini, green and blue. A seaside town for the green and blue economy	Rimini Tiberio open laboratory: towards a digital community in Rimini	437.500 €
UNION of Municipalities of BASSA ROMAGNA (RA)	SmARt LanD - Sustainable Attractive Resilient Linked Digital	OPEN LABs BASSA ROMAGNA, for inclusive and sustainable digitization	350.000€
UNION of Municipalities of ROMAGNA FAENTINA (RA)	A territory without barriers, without suburbs	Urban digital laboratories to promote digital transition in the Union and enhance sustainable behavior among citizens	438.000 €
UNION of Municipalities of TERRE D'ARGINE (MO)	ATUSS of the Union of Terre d'Argine	Open workshop on digital citizenship	437.000 €

STAMI AREA	STRATEGY TITLE	DIGITAL PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION	TOTAL RESOURCES
APPENNINO REGGIANO	The mountain of knowledge	Widespread Hub for Territorial Innovation: activation, participatory management and coordination of the 9 digital communities of Reggio Apennines (Union of the Mountain Municipalities of the Reggio Emilia Apennines – RE)	The project implements measures aimed at improving the quality of education, particularly regarding labor market issues, educational innovation, the environment, and the integration and socialization of young people	1.266.667 €
APPENNINO PIACENTINO-PARMENSE	Apennines Smart: a welcoming and restoring region	Digital School Bus 2.0 “Citizen Edition” (Unions Mountain Municipalities of Alta Val d’Arda – PC)	Continuation of the SNAI Digital School Bus project on digital literacy issues, extended to the non-school population. The project involves the itinerant dissemination of digital culture through the informed and guided use of devices and programs	193.200 €
		WeWonder Bardi – Initiatives for citizens and businesses (Municipality of Bardi – PR)	To provide technological services and workstations suitable for organizing initiatives to reduce the digital divide among citizens: training and computer literacy courses, promotion of the correct use of technological tools, support for citizens in accessing online PA services, promotion of the conscious use of social networks and support for the creation of start-ups	81.200 €
APPENNINO FORLIVESE E CESENATE	Rebirth of the Apennines in the Forlì and Cesena areas	Digital Community of the Apennines - Project for the promotion and participatory management of the territorial innovation network of Forlì and Cesena mountains (Municipality of Civitella di Romagna)	The term “digital” within the project includes two areas: as a way of working and as content. On one hand, it represents the approach that makes it easier to plan, implement, and solve challenges through technologies (social media, apps, SPID, or email). On the other hand, it refers to the content, meaning the tech tools themselves (apps, smartphones, headsets, or 3D printers)	850.000 €

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION in EMILIA-ROMAGNA supported by NPPR RESOURCES



Progress status Mission 1 - digitalization, innovation, competitiveness, and culture

Missione	Risorse PNRR	Pagamenti PNRR	% pagam. PNRR
☐ M1 Digitalizzazione, innovazione, competitività e cultura	544M €	261M €	48%
☐ M1C1 Digitalizzazione, innovazione e sicurezza nella PA	193M €	71M €	37%
☐ M1C2 Digitalizzazione, innovazione e competitività nel sistema produttivo	342M €	186M €	54%
☐ M1C3 Turismo e Cultura 4.0	9M €	3M €	38%

2028-2034 MFF

How can DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
be promoted within
the next MFF 2028-34?

2028-2034 Multiannual Fund Frame PROPOSAL

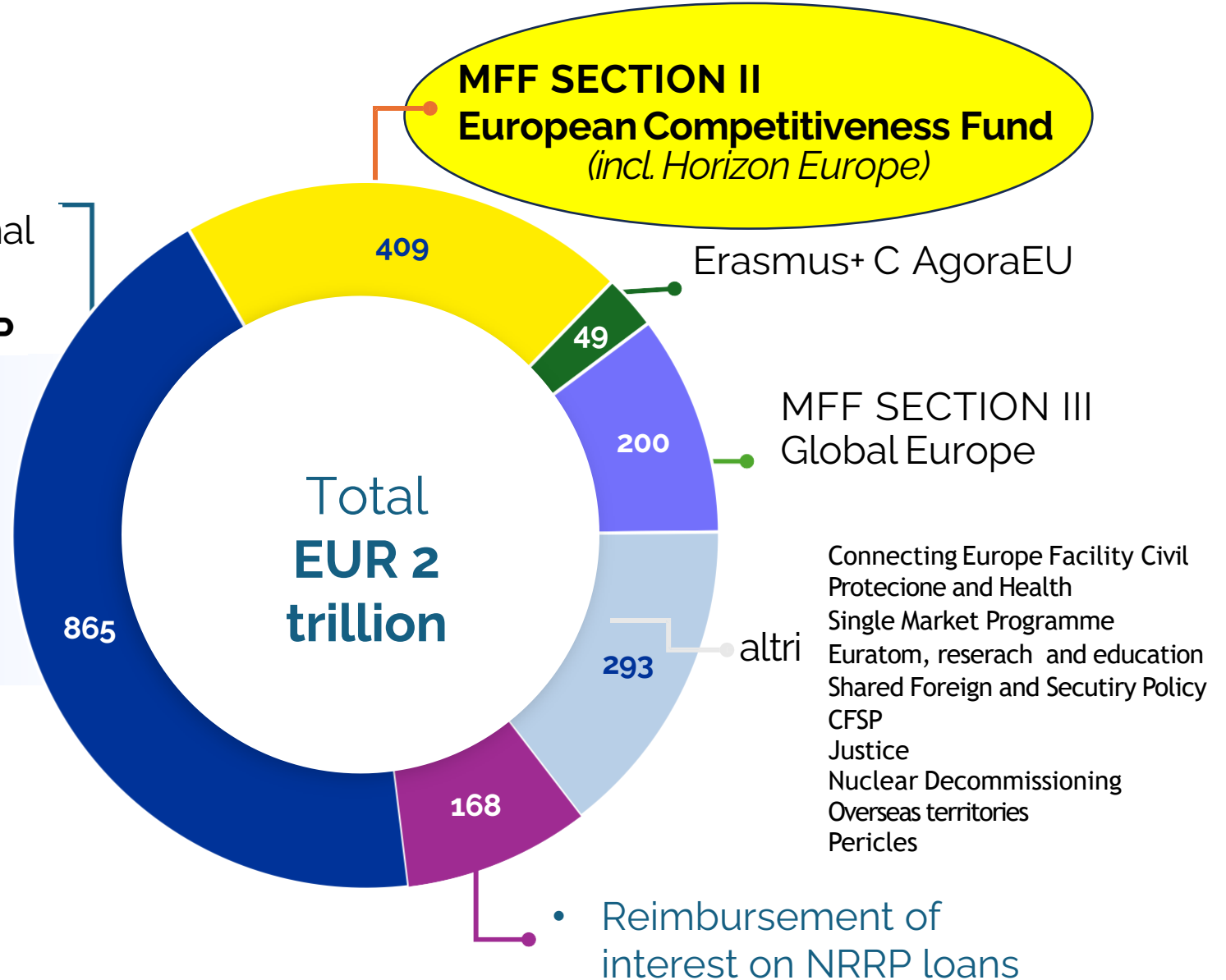
(July 16, 2025)

MFF SECTION I

National and Regional
Partnership Plans

NRRP

- From 52 to **16 programmes**
- **Easier for** beneficiaries
- **Result-Oriented**
- **More flexible**



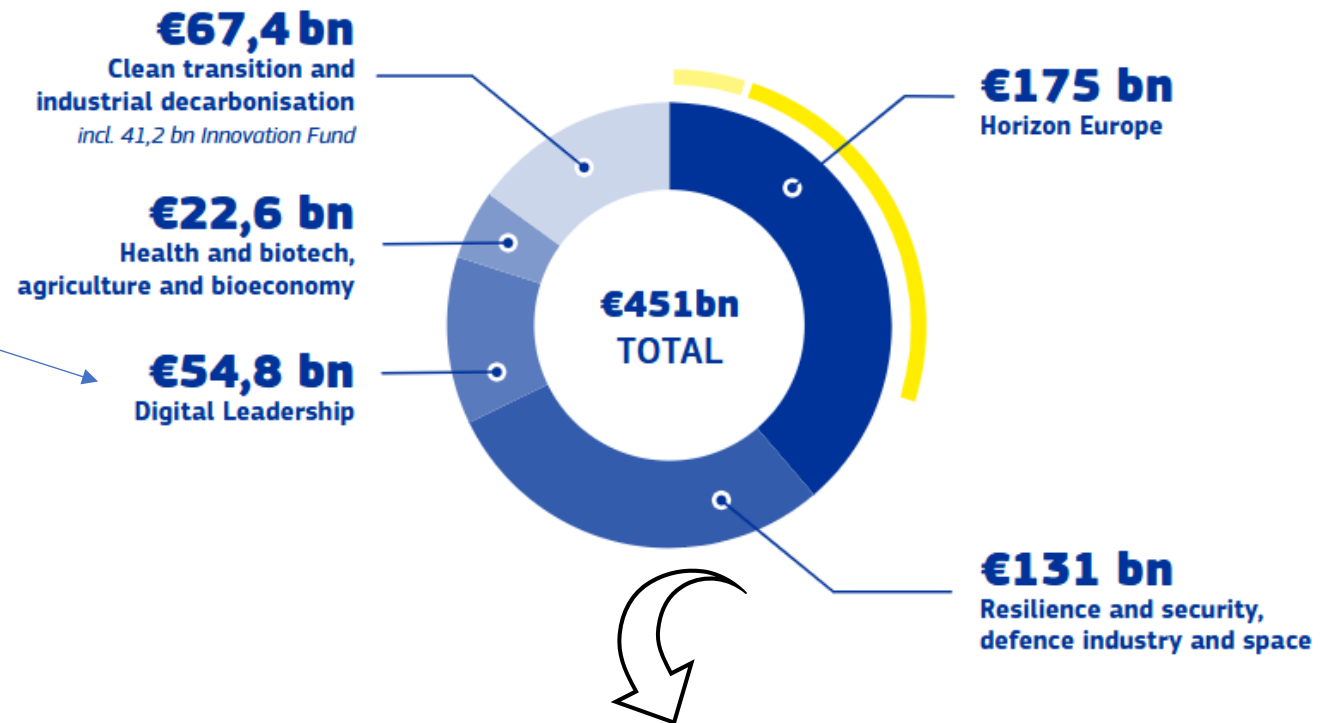
All amounts in EUR, current prices, adjusted with 2 % deflator

The **FUND'S DIGITAL LEADERSHIP** window (€54.8 billion) will focus on:

- Development and deployment of AI, quantum computing, semi-conductors, 6G, cybersecurity and data infrastructure;
- Support for multi-country projects under IPCEIs;
- Consolidation of the EU's industrial and technology value chains;
- Dual-use innovation across civil and defence domains;
- Continued support for digital public services and common EU data spaces

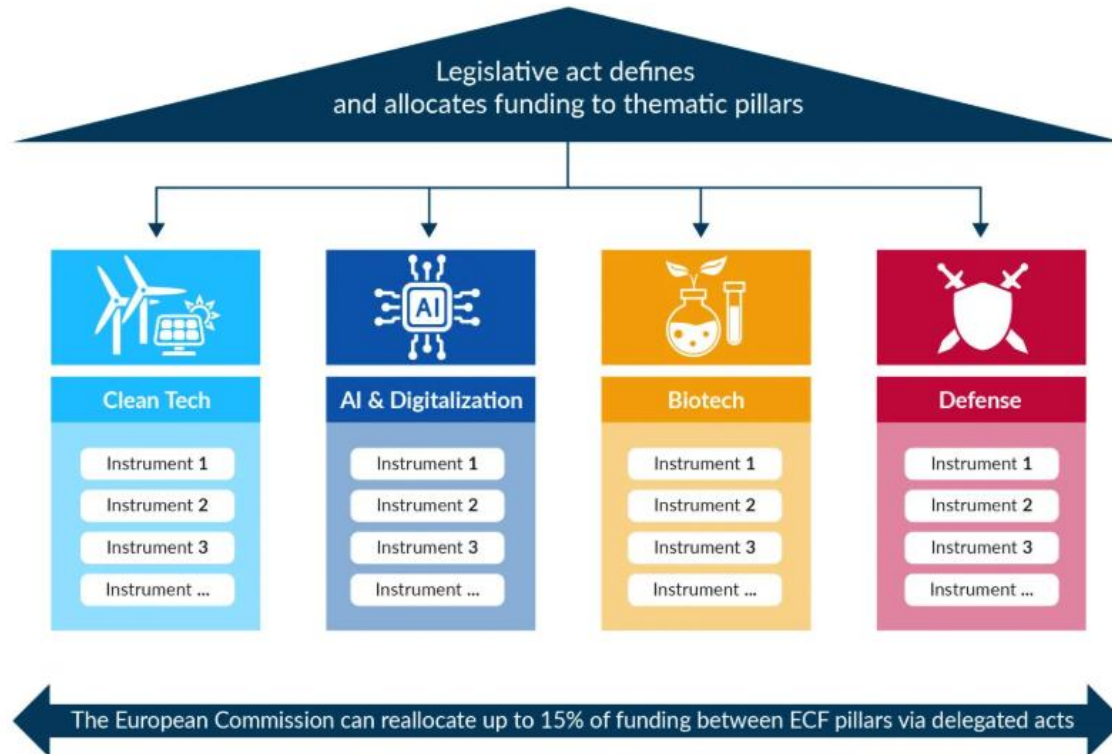
The new MFF aims to boost EU **competitiveness** in 4 key sectors:

- Clean transition and industrial decarbonization (67,4 bn);
- Health and biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy (22,6 bn);
- **Digital leadership (54,8 bn);**
- Resilience and security, defence industry and space (131 bn)



409 bn European Competitiveness Fund
+ 41,2 bn Innovation Fund = **TOTAL 451 bn**

ECF GOVERNANCE



CRITICAL GOVERNANCE ISSUES:

- **Thematic overlap**
- **Gaps and Incoherence across the innovation ecosystem**
- **Administrative complexity**
- **Financial tools without strategy**

National and Regional Partnership Plans: Digitalization at country level

The proposed National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs) intend to merge cohesion, agricultural, and recovery instruments into a single planning framework designed to give Member States more flexibility.



Digitalization is positioned as a **horizontal enabler across five objectives**: competitiveness (support businesses), green transition (align investments with EU-wide priorities), inclusion (improve connectivity), security (strengthen cybersecurity) and governance (modernize public services).

Unlike in the current MFF, the **NRPPs** will not feature dedicated digital expenditure targets or envelopes. While the Commission argues that this single-plan model will "*enhance flexibility and coherence across policy areas*", mirroring the centralized governance logic of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), and giving Member States greater control over investment planning – such centralization **could blur spending priorities** and **weaken** the visibility of **digital investments**.



Whether the NRPPs succeed in supporting Europe's digital cohesion will depend on how national governments translate this flexibility into concrete action

Thank you

Caterina Brancaleoni

HEAD OF SECTOR COORDINATING EUROPEAN POLICIES AND FUNDS – EMILIA-ROMAGNA



Emilia-Romagna. Insieme, con cura.



Funded by
the European Union

Leveraging the power of Living-in.EU signatories to engage with national authorities on funding

Piia Wollstén

Director for Digital Services Development

City of Espoo

Espoo and the Next EU Funding Framework

Piia Wollstén
Director for Digital Service Development

City of Espoo

Strategic planning for upcoming
European financial programs



Espoo and the Next EU Funding Framework



Opening Remarks

Commitment to Digital and Green Transition

Espoo is dedicated to advancing Europe's digital and green transformation through sustainable urban initiatives.

Impact of EU Budget Changes

Upcoming EU budget framework will affect funding access and project implementation for cities like Espoo.

Active Partnership and Engagement

Espoo seeks to actively engage with EU initiatives to influence digital transformation and policy decisions.

Aligning Local and EU Strategies

The city aligns its local strategies with EU priorities to ensure its voice shapes broader policy discussions.

Multilevel Governance



Cities' Role in EU Budget Planning

Variation in Governance Structures

Governance across Europe differs, with some decisions made regionally and others highly localized in municipalities like Espoo.

Municipal Autonomy in Finland

Finnish municipalities such as Espoo have strong autonomy and play key roles in implementing public policies locally.

Need for Direct EU Funding Access

Espoo advocates for direct access to EU funding and greater inclusion in planning to advance local digital transformation.

Inclusive Governance Model

A balanced governance approach leverages local authorities to effectively achieve digital transformation goals.

Digital Twins and AI

Technology Leadership and Innovation



Advanced Technology Priorities

The ECF focuses on AI, data spaces, and cybersecurity as critical technological priorities for competitiveness.

Espoo's Leadership Role

Espoo leads in digital twin development and data-driven services, fostering local innovation and technology scaling.

City as Innovation Platforms

Cities provide proximity to citizens and operational agility, ideal for piloting and scaling tech solutions.

Building Collaborative Networks

Strong consortia are needed to overcome dependencies and complex EU processes, empowering smaller innovators.

Skills and Capabilities



Building Digital Competence

Tiered Training Model

Funding could be targeted to tiered training system for beginners, advanced users, and experts to build digital skills progressively.

Focus on Foundational Knowledge

Emphasis on GenAI and automation in public processes helps achieve quick wins and better service delivery.

Inclusive Learning Pathways

Creating inclusive learning opportunities empowers staff and residents to actively participate in digital transformation.

Funding for Capability Building

Sustained funding is crucial to support human skill development and effective use of digital tools. Development is rapid and therefore continuous learning is needed.

Partnerships and Ecosystems



Collaborative Innovation Models

Ecosystem Collaboration

Innovation thrives when cities, businesses, and research institutions collaborate effectively within ecosystems.

Flexible Funding Models

Espoo advocates for flexible funding that allows any consortium member to lead and fosters inclusive partnerships.

Local Contribution Mechanisms

Low own contribution requirements or alternative mechanisms help cover local contributions in collaborative projects.

Impactful and Scalable Solutions

Inclusive partnerships ensure projects align with EU objectives and provide scalable, real-world solutions.

Summary



Espoo's Strategic Priorities

Access to EU Funding

Espoo prioritizes direct access to EU funding to support local innovation and development projects.

Pilot Advanced Technologies

Espoo aims to pilot advanced technologies to foster innovation and smart city solutions.

Investment in Digital Skills

The city emphasizes improving digital skills to prepare its workforce for a digital future.

Support Collaborative Ecosystems

Espoo supports collaborative ecosystems to strengthen partnerships and shared innovation efforts.



**ESPOO
ESBO**



Funded by
the European Union

Q&A and discussion



Funded by
the European Union

Thank you!

Join the Living-in.EU
Movement & sign up for the
Living-in.EU Newsletter!



Join the Movement



Sign-up for the Newsletter



LIVING-IN.EU | GO-LI.EU





Funded by
the European Union

You have questions or need additional information – do not hesitate to reach out!



Chiara Venturini

Head of Digital Transformation
and Economic Development,
Eurocities

chiara.venturini@eurocities.eu



Gabriela Ruseva

Living-in.EU coordinator,
Eurocities

gabriela.ruseva@eurocities.eu



Ana D. Georgieva

Forum and Project Officer,
Eurocities

ana.georgieva@eurocities.eu



Luca Kerscher

Living-in.EU Project Officer,
Eurocities

luca.kerscher@eurocities.eu