In 2010, the European Council approved the strategy "Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". This is a new long-term strategy for the socio-economic development of the European Union replacing the Lisbon Strategy. It underlines the importance of close collaboration of Member States for the recovery from the economic crisis and the reforms that are necessary in time of further globalisation. 7 Flagship Initiatives detailing the necessary actions were designed to implement this strategy.

Background

The Europe 2020 strategy provides the basis for economic recovery of Europe towards 2020. It has identified three main priority areas: smart (based on knowledge and innovation), sustainable (resource efficient) and inclusive (fostering a high-employment economy) growth. The strategy has also set 5 main targets to be achieved:

- to raise the employment rate of the population aged 20-64 to 75%;
- to achieve a level of 3% of GDP invested in R&D;
- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990;
- to reduce the share of early school leavers to 10%;
- to help at least 20 million people leave out of poverty.

Strategy and its Flagship Initiatives

Realisation of the Europe 2020 strategy objectives and achieving its targets are the main goals of the European Union for the coming decade. To organise the necessary actions, the European Commission has designed seven Flagship Initiatives where the European Union together with its Member States can concentrate their efforts. These initiatives are:

- "Innovation Union";
- "Youth on the move";
- "A Digital Agenda for Europe";
- "Resource efficient Europe";
- "An industrial policy for the globalisation era";
- "An Agenda for new skills and jobs";
- "European Platform against Poverty".

Europe 2020 - EU and the Member States acting together

The Europe 2020 strategy and its Flagship Initiatives do not have their own budgets and their implementation should be ensured through other European and national policies. Special attention to the potential of Cohesion Policy in supporting the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and the Flagship Initiatives has been drawn by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

Using Cohesion Policy instruments to implement Flagship Initiatives requires an assessment of their interrelationships. The coherence between the current Cohesion Policy proposal and the Flagship initiatives is not yet clear. In this respect there is a need for clear roadmaps to indicate how different levels of action and different instruments can contribute to the Flagship initiatives.

It is important to remember that cohesion Policy is the main European Union instrument for harmonious development of its regions, by reducing regional disparities and enhancing competitiveness. Its objectives and instruments are established in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the support for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy has to be in line with these dispositions.
Study "How to integrate the EU Flagship initiatives into Cohesion Policy in the current and future funding periods"

This study focuses on the Europe 2020 strategy with particular reference to its seven Flagship Initiatives. It explores their coherence with Cohesion Policy and identifies ways of integrating the Flagship Initiatives into the future Common Strategic Framework.

Using a number of detailed case studies, it thoroughly examines experience in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in the context of the Structural Funds. Detailed roadmaps are provided for each Flagship Initiative, indicating what, when, how and by whom actions should be carried out over short-, medium- and long-term perspectives. Lastly, the report delivers recommendations related to the implementation of the Flagship initiatives using Cohesion Policy instruments.

Cohesion Policy and Flagship Initiatives

The current Cohesion Policy proposal barely mentions Flagship Initiatives. The proposal is oriented along the lines of 11 Thematic Objectives, which cover all the five Funds included in the Common Strategic Framework (Cohesion Fund (CF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF)). However, even though these objectives are very relevant for the Flagship Initiatives, they do not consider the action plans proposed in the Flagship communications.

After comparing the different thematic objectives of the future Cohesion Policy, the different funding fields and the thematic orientation of the Flagship Initiatives, the above mentioned study has achieved the following conclusions. For the Flagships ‘Digital Agenda’, ‘Innovation Union’ and ‘Industrial Policy’, the ERDF covers a broad range of relevant themes, but the role of the ERDF in relation to Resource–efficient Europe is less clear. With regard to social factors, the Flagships on ‘New Skills and Jobs’ and ‘European Platform against Poverty’ are mostly related to ESF. ‘Youth on the Move’ is somewhat less important in relation to the ESF, but is covered by other non-Cohesion Policy instruments such as the Lifelong Learning Programme. EAFRD and the EMFF directly mention the contribution to innovation, improvement of ICT infrastructure, resource efficiency, support for SMEs and skills development.

EU Funds mentioned in the EC Communication on the Flagship Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flagship Initiative</th>
<th>ERDF</th>
<th>CF</th>
<th>ESF</th>
<th>EAFRD</th>
<th>EMFF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Digital Agenda</td>
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<td>√√</td>
<td>√√√</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Innovation Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Youth on the Move</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Resource Efficiency</td>
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<td>5) Industrial Policy</td>
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<td>6) Skills and Jobs</td>
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<td>7) Poverty</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

√√√ Primary role; √√ Secondary role; √ Implicit/noted role.
* Highlighted only in draft regulation of EMFF, ** highlighted only in Common Strategic Framework (CSF).
Source: Study "How to integrate the EU Flagship initiatives into Cohesion Policy in the current and future funding periods"

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Flagship Initiatives and the Cohesion Policy

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