



Slovakia: a year on, an EU initiative helped improve the economy and everyday life in the Prešov region

Brussels, 18 June 2019

Today, the European Commission takes stock of the [first year of implementation](#) of the '[Catching up Regions Initiative](#)' in the Prešov region. This Slovak 'low-income region', which GDP is rapidly growing but remains well under the EU and Slovak average, has been benefiting from Commission and World Bank expertise to boost jobs and growth. The second phase of the initiative will start next month.

Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"The Catching up Regions initiative shows that Cohesion Policy is not a one-size-fits-all policy. It is able to adapt to specific regional needs and I am glad to see the impressive results the initiative has had in the Prešov region. This is also thanks to the great cooperation between Commission and World Bank experts and the regional authorities: congratulations to all!"*

The experts have helped regional authorities design an action plan for economic transformation, including structural reforms in order to improve the local investment environment. €1.3 million from EU funds supported the design and implementation of this action plan. Here are some of the results:

More investments in the skills of the local labour force

To address the mismatch between educational offer and labour market demand and improve the skills of the local labour force, the region invested EU funds in five schools so they adapt their vocational education and training (VET) curricula. This will help train pupils for the jobs of tomorrow, in such fields as mechanical engineering, agri-food, bioeconomy, gastronomy, crafts and services.

A more efficient management of energy in the region

The region has developed an Energy Management System, which will systematically assess the region's 488 public buildings' energy consumption and identify opportunities for more energy savings. The aim is to roll out the system to other Slovak regions, which also need to boost their energy efficiency.

A new regional data system to improve decision-making

The region now employs a team of experts managing geographical data and opted for open source software. Thanks to these changes, the region has managed to overcome a previous lack of data. This way, the authorities are now in a position to make evidence-based decisions for regional development.

Next steps

The implementation of the second phase of the Catching-up Regions Initiative in Slovakia will start as of July 2019 for another year, with €2 million from EU funds. The focus will be on:

- a) rolling out the results of the work in the Prešov region to the Banská Bystrica region, focusing mainly on vocational education and training (VET), sustainable mobility, as well as research and innovation;
- b) extending the work on VET, geographic information systems and regional development activities such as tourism in the Prešov region;
- c) starting new projects in Prešov, especially targeting the integration of marginalised Roma communities and administrative capacity-building in the Prešov regional office.

Background

In June 2015, the Commission launched a broad [initiative](#) to examine the factors that hold back growth and investment in low-growth and low-income regions in the EU.

Low-growth regions have a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of up to 90% of the EU average but a persistent lack of growth, while low-income regions' GDP per head is growing, but still below 50% of the EU average. These regions are home to 83 million inhabitants, i.e. 1 out of 6 EU residents.

A Commission's [report](#) published in April 2017 detailed the investment needs, growth determinants, macro-economic framework and need for structural reforms in these regions. Regions in Poland, Romania and Slovakia have already benefitted from the initiative.

More information

- [Catching-Up Regions Initiative in Slovakia: Prešov Region – Key Development Dynamics Report](#)
- [Memo: Promoting competitiveness in low-income and low-growth regions \(2017\)](#)
- [IP: Launch of the Catching up Regions initiative in Slovakia](#) (2018)
- [Catching-up Regions Initiative in Prešov region](#)

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