



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **European Commission urges outermost regions to set their sights on EU 2020 goals and to capitalize on their individual strengths**

The European Commission will be hosting the "Third Forum of the Outermost Regions" in Brussels on 30 September-1 October to discuss joint efforts towards more dynamic economic and social development in the outermost regions and to realize their full potential. The event brings together the Presidents of Europe's outermost regions, representatives from their three Member States, members of civil society and the business sector as well as representatives of the EU institutions: José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, Michel Lebrun, President of the Committee of the Regions, Rossella Rusca, Representative of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Louis-Joseph Manscour, member of European Parliament.

The Forum is expected to facilitate important exchanges on how to help the nine regions (Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Reunion, Martinique, St Martin, the Azores, Madeira, Mayotte and the Canary Islands) to target resources and investments in the most optimal way, capitalising on their specific characteristics and strengths.

The outermost regions as well as all the other European regions benefit hugely from the new Cohesion Policy, whose recent reform was spearheaded by Commissioner Johannes Hahn. Cohesion Policy has become the main investment instrument of the EU aimed at reducing economic and social disparities across Europe. With a total budget of around €352 billion for the 2014–2020 programming period, Cohesion Policy plays a vital role in key areas like energy efficiency, social inclusion and SMEs, making a real contribution to the Europe 2020's goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

More than EUR 6.6 billion will be allocated to the outermost regions for the period 2014-2020 under Cohesion Policy via the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund.

Boosting employment and job creation through an increased support for small and medium sized business, research and development, innovation, labour market measures and education is a key aspect of Cohesion Policy setting all European regions onto a common path of growth and prosperity. Commissioner Hahn has worked with the outermost regions to ensure that each identifies its own specific potentials, so that EU funds can be orientated towards these, to support modernisation and diversification of their economies. Business partners have been invited to the Forum, so that the outermost regions can showcase themselves in the sectors they have identified as strategically important for their development.

The recent reform of the outermost regions continues to take into account the special characteristics of the outermost regions which are recognised under Article 349 of the TFEU. In a number of ways they are granted greater flexibility than other regions in the programming of funds for 2014-20.

Speaking ahead of the event, Commissioner Johannes Hahn for EU Regional Policy said: *"Regional policy has provided the outermost regions with the instruments to unleash their potential, to stand on their own two feet and to contribute in a meaningful way to the EU's overall growth objectives. Above all, Regional Policy and its investments should be one of the key ways to improve the quality of life for people living in our outermost regions: to create jobs, to tackle poverty and improve basic services like drinking water and waste management. Thanks to the new round of investments from the European Structural and Investment Funds and the reform of our policy for 2014-2020, these nine regions are better equipped to overcome the difficulties they face, by turning their disadvantages into assets and opportunities, by modernising and diversifying their economies and becoming engines of competitiveness, smart and green growth."*

He added *"This Forum allows the outermost regions to exchange ideas on how to fine tune their strategies in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. I welcome this occasion to pool our joint efforts while promoting the special features and unique assets of the outermost regions within the Union."*

The Presidents will gather under the theme "9 regions at the heart of the Europe of today and tomorrow". Three thematic panels will focus on: employment and education; sectors with high potential for the development of the regions and regional integration and increased accessibility. The overall aim is to make the best use of the resources available to these regions and to maximize results.

## **Flagship projects supported by EU funds**

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[Capelinhos Lighthouse](#)

### **Canary Islands:**

[The Great Canaries Telescope project](#)

### **Madeira:**

[Centro Tratamento de Resíduos](#)

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### **Martinique:**

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**More information:**

[3rd Forum of the Outermost Regions website](#)

[Regional policy and the OR](#)

**Twitter:**

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**Contacts :**

[Shirin Wheeler](#) (+32 2 296 65 65) - (mobile: +32 460766565)

[Annemarie Huber](#) (+32 2 299 33 10) - (mobile: +32 460 793 310)