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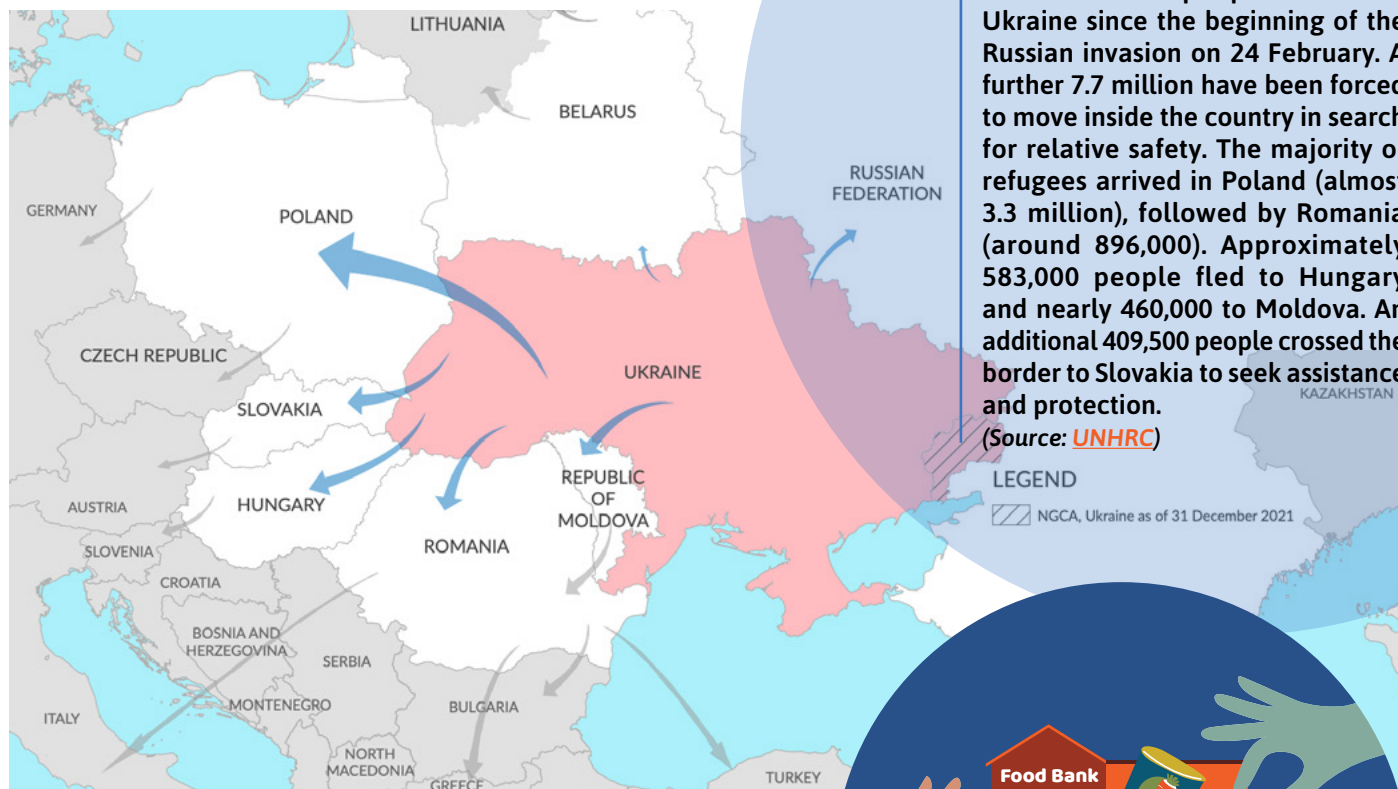
EUROPEAN COMMISSION / Forum debate

The war in Ukraine: it's repercussions from a food security perspective and EU response measures to ameliorate them

24 February 2022, the day on which Russia started its invasion of Ukraine, marks the beginning of a worrisome period. With the unfolding crisis and relentless bombardment, it has become increasingly clear that this war on the European Union's doorstep does not just have devastating impacts on the Ukrainian population but has sparked an **avalanche of repercussions across Europe and beyond**.

Sanctions, supply-chain disruptions, and pure destruction aggravate a situation already marked by high input costs and bottlenecks resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Among the consequences are **rising levels of inflation, increasing energy costs, and spiking prices for fertilizers, raw materials, and staple food – a development with widespread ramifications for actors of the entire food system, from farm to fork**.

Hence, food security must once again be placed on a top position of the political agenda. In the short-term, Ukrainian people not able or willing to leave their homes in cities under attack, being displaced internally, or making their way to other EU/European countries are affected the most by acute food shortages. The impacts are likely to trickle down throughout the European community, with, as often, the most deprived being hit the hardest.



Ukraine Refugee situation

According to the Operational Data Portal of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as of 11 May 2022, more than 6 million people have fled Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion on 24 February. A further 7.7 million have been forced to move inside the country in search for relative safety. The majority of refugees arrived in Poland (almost 3.3 million), followed by Romania (around 896,000). Approximately 583,000 people fled to Hungary and nearly 460,000 to Moldova. An additional 409,500 people crossed the border to Slovakia to seek assistance and protection.

(Source: [UNHCR](#))

LEGEND

NGCA, Ukraine as of 31 December 2021

FEBA'S RESPONSE

FEBA launches campaign to support its members

On 1 March, the European Food Banks Federation (FEBA) launched the [campaign #AllTogether4Ukraine](#). The aim is to raise funds and food to support its members – at the moment in Ukraine, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia – who are helping the people of Ukraine. Since then, FEBA has strengthened the daily dialogue with its membership and is mainly supporting members as follows:

1. monitoring the situation and assessing the needs;
2. providing financial support, in particular to the affected members;
3. and, last but not least, coordinating the delivery of food – donated by Western members as well as food business operators.

In addition, the FEBA Board of Directors decided to grant the temporary status of Associate Member to Banca de Alimente in Moldova and Federația Băncilor pentru Alimente din România (FBAR) in Romania. The latter replaces Banca pentru Alimente București which has been a FEBA Associate Member since 2019.



#AllTogether4Ukraine

Beyond its network of Food Banks, FEBA also reinforces the collaboration with other stakeholders of the food system, such as [FoodDrinkEurope](#), who released a [statement](#) and suggestions for short-, medium-, and long-term action required to ensure food supply and build resilience as the war in Ukraine continues.



EU Commission Communication on Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems

The notion mentioned in the introduction is reiterated in the recent Communication on [Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems](#) published by the European Commission on 23 March 2022. It sets out action in the following three areas:

1. Presents immediate actions to **protect food security** in Ukraine and on a global scale;
2. Addresses the challenge to **guarantee food stability** within the EU's food system by outlining support measures to farmers and citizens; and
3. Confirm the agenda to **make the EU food system resilient and sustainable**.

The Commission is committed to taking all **necessary measures to ensure that the EU, as a net food exporter and top agri-food producer, contributes to global food security**, particularly in Ukraine, North Africa and the Middle East, which largely rely on imports of cereals, as well as in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The EU is a lead provider of humanitarian and development assistance on food and food systems.

Although the EU is largely self-sufficient for the majority of agricultural products and thus, the availability of staple food is not considered to be at stake, the **affordability of food items being part of a nutritious diet is jeopardised** as a lasting war and consequential supply challenges put pressure on global commodity prices. Hence, vulnerable citizens, including refugees from Ukraine, children, elderly, and low-income persons, must be protected from food insecurity interrelated with poverty and social exclusion. Already affected by high energy prices and the economic shock triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, they are especially prone to suffering from rising food costs.

The new **European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM)**, of which FEBA is a member, will increase cooperation to mitigate food security risks, and monitor the situation closely. Member States are encouraged

War-related implications for EU agri-food sectors

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) published its spring 2022 edition of the [report 'Short-term outlook for EU agricultural markets in 2022'](#) on 5 April 2022. It summarises **trends and prospects for a variety of agri-food sectors**, taking into account the wide-ranging consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which disturbed global agricultural markets. Although the EU single market is assumed to absorb shocks, skyrocketing prices and steep inflation curves put strain on food producers and consumers.

to share data on essential food and feed stocks to enable the painting of a comprehensive picture regarding the availability of staple goods.

As regards the sustainability and resilience of the EU food system, the Communication reinforces the relevance of the [Green Deal](#) and the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#). Setting the path towards the reduction of input dependency without compromising agricultural productivity, they are considered as a crucial part of the crisis response.

The Communication further pinpoints at recently proposed EU initiative named [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe \(CARE\)](#) allowing Member States to draw from EU social funds such as the [Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#) to provide food and/or basic material assistance, reaching over 15 million people with food aid. More details can be found below.



Cohesion Policy's response to the Ukraine crisis

The efforts of Member States to address the immediate and long-term scale of this challenge posed by the war in Ukraine will require financial support at Union level. To this end, the European Commission has proposed to facilitate the flexible use of funding still available from 2014-2020 programmes under the cohesion and home affairs policy.

According to the official press release, on 4 April 2022, following the European Parliament's approval, the European Commission welcomed the Council's adoption of its proposal for [Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe \(CARE\)](#), the novel initiative allowing Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion. Amending the 2014-2020 legal framework governing the [Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#) and the [European Structural and Investment Funds \(ESIF\)](#), CARE will support the Member States' efforts to **cover the basic needs of refugees, including food, water, accommodation, and medical care.**

The proposal intends to facilitate and speed up the mobilisation of remaining resources from cohesion funds of the 2014-2020 programming period. Moreover, the **100% co-financing rate** for this timeframe applied in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be extended by one financial year to ease national budgetary pressures. To use this option, Member States only need to notify the EU Commission, a decision is no longer required.

As regards the financial sources underlying CARE, **€9.5 billion** of the **€10 billion allocated for the 2022 package of the [Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe \(REACT-EU\)](#)** will be available for spending in the areas of employment, child care, education, and social inclusion. Furthermore, they can be used to finance the setup of reception centres, shelters, mobile hospitals, and water and sanitary infrastructure and thereby directly support those Member States hosting people in need.

In total, the extension of the 100% financing option, the unlocking of unprogrammed 2014-2020 cohesion funds, and the 2022 REACT-EU tranche are estimated **to release almost €17 billion.**

The EU stands in solidarity with Ukraine against the brutal invasion of the Russian Federation. Today's proposals will make it easier and faster to mobilise Cohesion funds to help people fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as to support Member States and frontline regions welcoming them. In addition, the exceptional 100% co-financing rate applied in response to the pandemic will be extended by a year, I invite the European Parliament and the Council to swiftly consider this proposal so that Member States and regions can make use of these new opportunities as quickly as possible.

Elisa Ferreira,
Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms

Additionally, **FEAD funds** will be crucial to immediately provide much-needed food and basic material assistance. Member States will be able to use resources either from the [European Fund for Regional Development \(ERDF\)](#) or the [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) for any type of support measures, with the possibility to shift money from one to the other. Member States can further apply for support retroactively as of the start date of the Russian invasion.

To reduce the administrative burden, the programme notification adoption process as well as the reporting will be simplified.



In summary, CARE aims at **providing additional flexibility in cohesion policy funding and FEAD programmes** to assist Member States hosting Ukrainian refugees, including third country nationals. The new rules will support Member States on migration and border management needs arising from the arrivals of people fleeing the war against Ukraine, especially as regards first reception needs such as emergency accommodation, food, healthcare and extra staff.

The outlaid funding initiatives are part of a comprehensive **overview of measures**, entitled **'The 10-Point Plan: For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine'**, set up by the EU Commission's Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME).

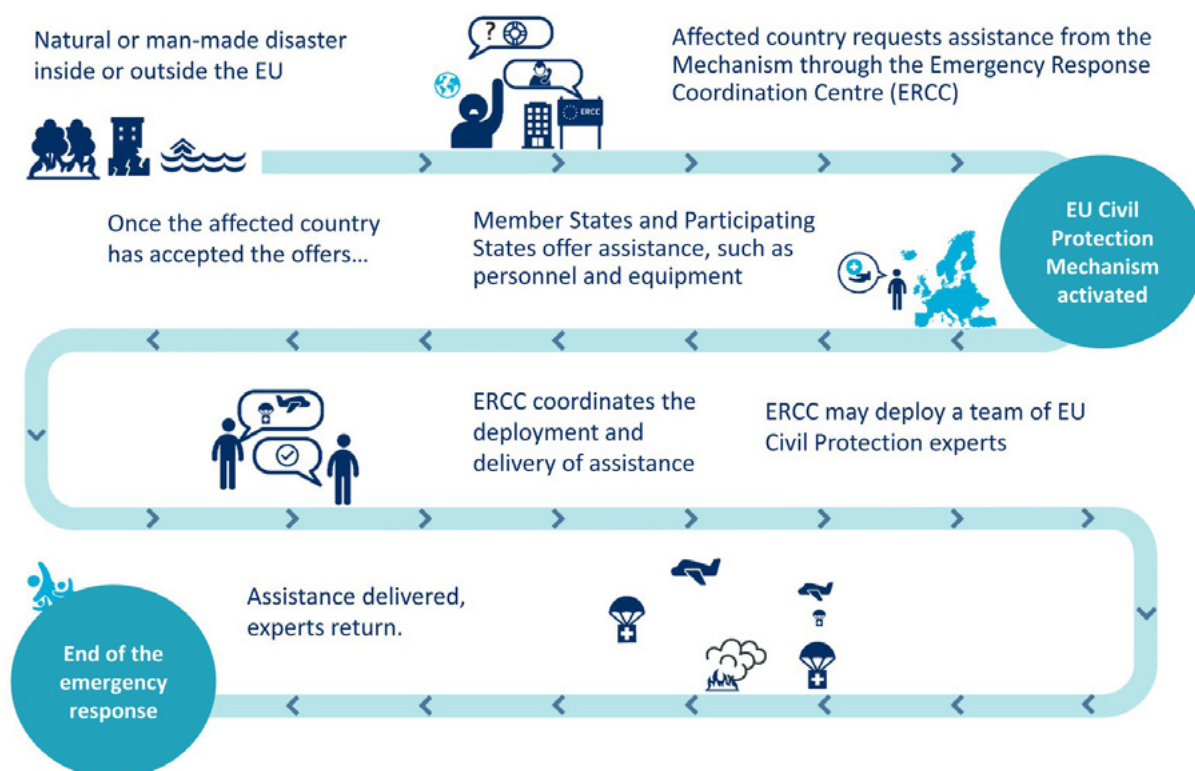
EU Civil Protection Mechanism

Established in 2001, the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** aims at strengthening the cooperation between the 27 EU Member States and 6 additionally Participating States (Iceland, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and Turkey) on civil protection. Thereby, it envisages to **improve prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters**, with the EU Commission playing a crucial role in the coordination.

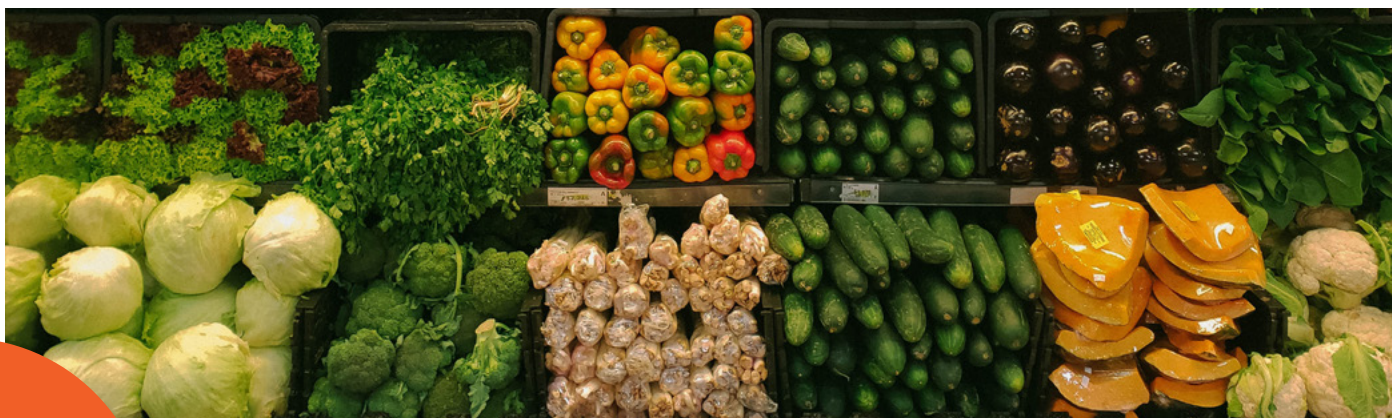
So far, the Mechanism has been **activated over 540 times**, leading to the mobilisation of assistance and expertise by the **Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)**, which is directly linked to national civil protection authorities.

A call for help can be made not just by the countries directly involved but by any state, including the United Nations and international organisations. In the past, it responded to the Coronavirus pandemic, floods, earthquakes, and forest fires, but also repatriations from Afghanistan, among others.

The outbreak of the war in Ukraine triggered the largest emergency operation since the setup of the Mechanism. All EU countries plus Turkey and Norway provided items such as power generators, first aid kits, shelter equipment, and fuel to support the people in Ukraine but also refugees in adjacent countries like Moldova, Poland, or Slovakia.



Source: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/civil-protection/mechanism_en



JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE / Report



JRC publishes the report “Concepts for a sustainable EU food system – Reflections from a participatory process”

Food systems, both on EU level and the global scale, must become environmentally-friendly, fair, and healthy, i.e. they must undergo a transition towards sustainability as stipulated in the EU Farm to Fork Strategy. On the backdrop of this notion, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission published the report **Concepts for a sustainable EU food system – Reflections from a participatory process** in January 2022.

Overarching key aspects stressed by the diverse set of research participants include:

- The **importance of non-financial dimensions of the EU food system**, i.e. the paradigm shift away from economic gains and growth at any cost and towards the long-term provision of food security as the ultimate goal;
- The **urgency of action** to avoid irreversible damages, especially in relation to climate change and biodiversity;
- **Mandatory approaches**, i.e. the introduction of binding rules;
- **Agency, empowerment, and responsibility**, i.e. the identification of particularly powerful food system stakeholders, who should act in a responsible manner. Among the ones considered most influential are food and drink manufacturers, retailers, finance and international traders, whereas primary producers and consumers are deemed as being in need of empowerment.

Moreover, taking into account the social, environmental, and economic dimensions inherent in the concept of sustainability, the conducted research led to the identification of **five building blocks** on which a legislative framework accelerating and facilitating the required transition could be based on:



1. **Sustainability assessment framework** to monitor progress at food system level, especially in regard to food security, resilience, environment, fair, inclusive, and ethical operation, and economic viability;
2. **Transparency in the food system**, fostered by harmonised definitions, rules, and methods, to facilitate the exchange of data and information and balance asymmetries;
3. **Dealing with the consequences of the transition**, including the management of possible short-term adverse repercussions experienced by food system actors;
4. **Policy coherence and multi-level governance**, requiring coordinated and simultaneous action across the food system and policy domains to achieve long-term food security for all within the EU without negatively impacting food systems in third countries;

5. **International trade for sustainable food systems**, i.e. protect global public goods and cushion the negative effects of EU food consumption outside the EU through the implementation of sustainability standards.

Conclusively, the report finds that digital and physical food environments should be established, including appropriate

information and education, that allow consumers to actively support the transition path towards sustainability while being able to afford a healthy diet. Nonetheless, the price of food place a crucial role and, instead of being kept artificially low, should reflect the true costs of production.



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE / EVENT

EU Civil Society Days

The **EU Civil Society Days 2022**, which took place on the 15 to 17 March 2022, brought together citizens, civil society organisations, and European Institutions in an inclusive process to address the **major societal challenges the EU currently faces in shaping its future**. The event was organised under the overarching topic of *'The EU as a driver of shared prosperity - civil society for an economy that works for people and the planet'*.

Discussions in the plenary sessions and seven thematic, **interactive workshops** focused on how EU civil society can help to build a **thriving economy that leaves no one behind** in the new context shaped by the pandemic and the war



in Ukraine, against the backdrop of the twin green and digital transitions.

The figure below details the **7 thematic workshops and their generated recommendations**:



WORKSHOP

1 / Upscaling opportunities for all

2 / Intergenerational dialogues among EU entrepreneurs



RECOMMENDATIONS

- We need to train active engineers to **develop the competences** necessary to face sustainability challenges.
- **Long Life Learning for all**: all individuals should have full ownership of their education rights in the skills revolution, including those most in need.
- We need **intergenerational, international, intercultural, multidisciplinary, and cross-sector collaboration** to co-create a better future for the EU and the rest of the world.
- We need to **redefine the way we measure progress**; i.e. to not only track GDP but also take into consideration the effects of human activity in the environment.



WORKSHOP

3 / Volunteers for prosperity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The European Commission should take action to declare 2025 the **European Year of Volunteers**.
- We need to develop a **volunteering policy on EU level** to include all generations, not just youth.
- **Transparent and democratically distributed state funding** to volunteering initiatives with clear and transparent procedures is essential

4 / Enabling environment for civil society: the case for meaningful participation

We recommend for EU policy makers to establish policies based on:

- better recognition of **civil dialogue**
- enabling legal frameworks and creation of a **European level playing field**
- access to public funding and overcoming barriers to **cross-border philanthropy**
- **monitoring and protection mechanisms** at EU level in case national laws and policy are in conflict with EU law/fundamental rights.

5 / Building a democratic economy for just transition

- To reach climate neutrality and ensure no one is left behind EU institutions must ensure meaningful participation of stakeholders in decision making, using various forms of **citizens' engagement and participatory democracy**.
- We need an EU strategy that **supports and scales up existing solutions**, such as energy communities, broad just transition alliances, and social economy solutions.

6 / A green social market economy for the future of Europe

- **Social Economy Action** should be a key pillar of Europe's strategy to strengthen a Green Social Market Economy.
- A **treaty change** may be needed to grant the Union autonomous fiscal powers and spending capacities to attain sufficient resources and competencies to address environmental and social issues

7 / The future of social protection and the European welfare state: minimum income schemes and access to quality social services.

- Civil society organisations, social service providers, and people affected by policies need to be **involved in all stages of policy making** on future reforms of welfare states and social protection systems
- More needs to be done to **guarantee a decent life for all**: people in employment need to earn a decent wage and have fair working conditions. People outside the labour market need to be able to rely on minimum income schemes that
- **Social services** need to be affordable & accessible for all.



EUROPEAN COMMISSION / FORUM DEBATE

8th EU Cohesion Forum

On 17 and 18 March 2022, the European Commission hosted the **8th Cohesion Forum**. The event brought together high-level representatives from European institutions, central, regional and local governments, economic and social partners, NGOs, and academia to focus on the **major challenges of European cohesion policy**. This year's edition, themed '*Recover, Rebuild, Reconnect*' gave opportunities for stakeholders to reflect upon **how cohesion, acting together with other EU policies, can improve wellbeing** for all European citizens.

Participants came together to discuss the **8th Cohesion report**, which was released in February 2022. The report carries out an analysis to show how the **map of regional disparities in Europe is becoming more complex**, with **development traps having a particular impact on the less developed regions in Southern Europe**.

Going forward, disparities may be further deepened by emerging trends: the digital and green transitions, and demographic changes. These **megatrends may be a source of**

further inequalities and may hamper the smooth functioning of the single market in the future.

The number of emerging challenges facing Europe's regions requires an extensive debate as to whether the current structure of cohesion policy will still be fit for purpose in the future.

The forum began with the Keynote speech delivered by Mr Monti, Economist and former Italian prime minister. The programme was then as follows:

- ➔ **1st Panel Debate: Cohesion and Recovery: (a)symmetric shocks- asymmetric recovery? Impact of the crisis:** The impacts of COVID-19 are still unfolding across the EU. This first panel debate addressed how cohesion policy can best support the recovery effort and help build a Union of resilient regions capable of leveraging the green and digital transitions.

- ➔ **Breakout Session: A Europe Closer to its citizens:** How can cohesion policy bring the EU closer to its citizens? This session discussed how tailor-made investment strategies in cities and local communities can foster regional development whilst engaging citizens and working across institutional and political boundaries.
- ➔ **Breakout Session: Smarter Europe/Smart Specialisation Strategies:** How has smart specialisation enhanced innovation potential for European regions? This session discussed what the impact of smart specialisation has been on regional governance and whether it made research and innovation policy more inclusive.
- ➔ **Breakout Session: A more social and inclusive Europe:** What has been the social impact of cohesion policy? This session discussed how cohesion policy can ensure equal access to the labour market and combat social inequalities across the EU and its regions
- ➔ **2nd Panel Debate: European Green Deal: a just and fair transition:** This panel debate discussed the critical question of how ambitious objectives of the **European Green Deal** can be achieved whilst minimising the growth of regional disparities to ensure a just and fair transition.
- ➔ **3rd Panel Debate: Innovation (divide) and digitalisation to enhance real long-term convergence:** The digital transition has significant implications for growth, competitiveness, and regional development. This final debate provided important input on how cohesion policy could support the EU's regions during the digital decade, as well as help narrow the innovation divide.

We all know the great strength of the cohesion: first it's pure power because cohesion comes with impressive financial backing. We are talking about €400 billion from 2021-2027 with an estimated 100 billion on top from Member States. But this is not all. Cohesion policy is so powerful first and foremost because it delivers on a core promise of our Union that all regions are equal, that European citizens no matter where – can live safe and prosperous lives.



Ursula von der Leyen,
President of the European Commission



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