

2014

JASPERS

Networking Platform
Activity Report

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JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a partnership between the European Commission (DG Regional Policy), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for supporting the preparation and implementation of large projects financed by EU Structural and Investment Funds.



The **JASPERS Networking Platform** was created to complement JASPERS' project advisory operations by implementing knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities, addressing specific project preparation issues of a horizontal nature, and fostering the dissemination of good practices and exchange of experiences among all EU Member States, pre-accession countries and other JASPERS stakeholders.

Introduction



Since the start of its operations in 2006, JASPERS has built up considerable knowledge and experience in project preparation and implementation, working closely with the European Commission and with our partners in the respective countries.

JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) is a partnership between the European Commission (DG Regional Policy), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to support the preparation and implementation of major projects financed by EU Structural and Investment Funds.

The number of countries in which JASPERS is operating has expanded over the years to include 14 EU



Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) and three Candidate Countries (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia).

JASPERS is a knowledge-driven initiative, building on the substantial experience acquired from hundreds of successful assignments, and drawing on the knowledge its experts bring to our counterparts in the Member States.

From 2006 to 2014 JASPERS completed more than 900 assignments. In many cases these assignments covered horizontal tasks in the form of specific studies, guidelines prepared by JASPERS, as well as capacity-building and training activities in support of the preparation and implementation of investment projects.

The initiative of developing a JASPERS Networking Platform focused on horizontal issues, capacity building and knowledge sharing stems from two considerations:

On the one hand, from the awareness that by addressing the dissemination and transfer of knowledge, good practices and positive experiences in a more efficient and systematic way, the impact of JASPERS assistance could be increased;

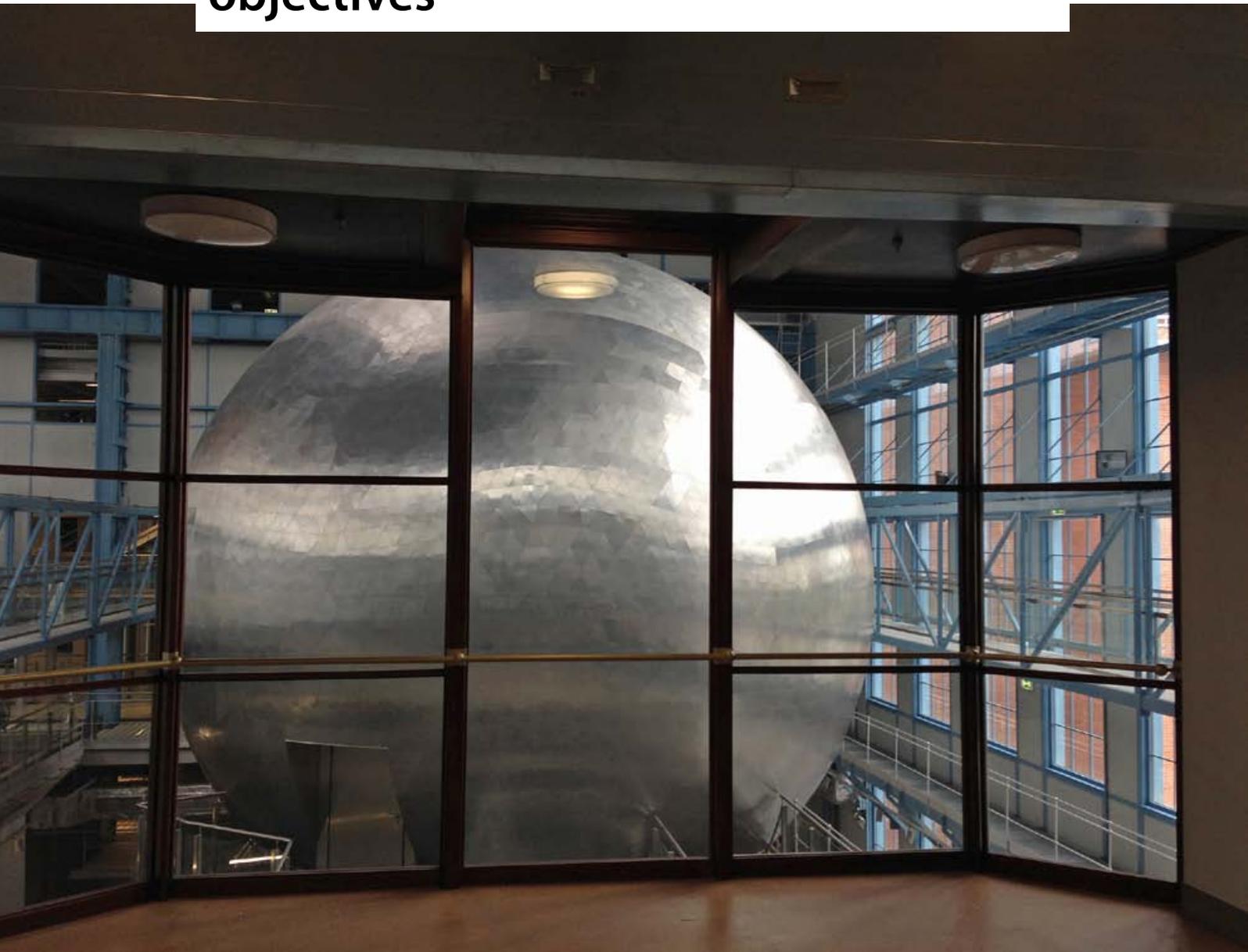
On the other, from the interest clearly indicated by Member States to increase their administrative capacity and learn from other countries' experience.

Knowledge sharing and capacity building are essential complements to project advisory operations and have emerged as an important activity for JASPERS in the European Union's 2014-2020 financial perspective.

The activities of the Networking Platform are expected to support both the short-term goals of improving project quality and increasing absorption of EU Structural and Investment Funds and the long-term goal of ensuring that JASPERS operations have a sustainable and lasting impact.

The activities of the JASPERS Networking Platform are open to public authorities and project promoters from all EU Member States as well as pre-accession countries. In this way, Platform members also have the opportunity to network, exchange experiences and discuss lessons learned and best practices with similar institutions across Europe.

Mission and objectives



The JASPERS Networking Platform was established in late 2012 to complement JASPERS' project advisory operations by implementing knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities, addressing common project preparation issues of a horizontal nature, as well as fostering the dissemination of good practices and exchange of experiences among all EU Member States, pre-accession countries and other JASPERS stakeholders.

Participation in the activities of the Networking Platform is open to JASPERS partners and relevant public authorities from all EU Member States and pre-accession countries.

In implementing its activities, the Networking Platform pursues the following objectives:

- Exploiting synergies to implement effective JASPERS capacity-building activities.
- Developing and disseminating JASPERS guidance, case studies, best practices, horizontal studies and other relevant knowledge.
- Consolidating JASPERS' horizontal activities relevant for a number of stakeholders and sectors.
- Providing a framework for networking and collaboration, and enabling the exchange of information, experiences and best practices among JASPERS' stakeholders.

Operations are organised around two main pillars of activity:

(a) a core activity focused on roundtables, seminars, workshops, formal training and capacity-building actions, targeted at representatives of the Member States, JASPERS' partners and European Commission services;

(b) a dedicated web portal to facilitate networking and collaboration, as well as the dissemination of JASPERS' guidance documents, horizontal studies and good practices.



2014 JASPERS Networking Platform Annual Meeting

The second Networking Platform Annual Meeting was held in Brussels in May 2014 in the presence of over 80 participants from Member States' authorities, representatives of the European Commission and JASPERS' partners.

The Annual Meeting was an opportunity to review the positive experience of the first year of activity, outline the 2014 programme for knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities, present the Networking Platform 2013 Annual Report and introduce to participants the new interactive Networking Platform web portal (www.jaspersnetwork.org).

Three dedicated thematic sessions provided insights on lessons learned and topics of general interest, including climate change adaptation and risk management, state aid modernisation and ex ante conditionalities in transport.

Rudolf Niessler, Director for Policy at DG REGIO, acknowledged the role of the Networking Platform as an important part of JASPERS' leverage, noted the activities successfully performed in the first year of operations and stressed that the European Commission supports the expansion of its scope to all Member States during the 2014-2020 financial perspective.

Operational activities



Overview

The activities of the JASPERS Networking Platform are organised in annual work programmes, which are submitted to the JASPERS Steering Committee for endorsement each year.

The specific actions covered by annual work programmes are selected on the basis of past experience, Member States' requests and issues emerging during project preparation efforts assisted by JASPERS. Roundtables, knowledge-sharing and training events are mainly held in Brussels, and organised in close cooperation with the European Commission.

The 2014 work programme focused on issues relevant to the preparation of the 2014-2020 programming period, and included the following actions:

- Design of energy efficiency measures for the 2014-2020 programming period.
- Requirements and lessons learned for nature protection in the preparation of large projects.
- State aid modernisation and legal framework.
- Preparation of comprehensive transport plans and action plans in line with 2014-2020 ex ante requirements.
- Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management for water sector infrastructure.
- Cost-benefit analysis methodologies.

Details about Networking Platform activities and events during 2014 are provided in the following sections.



Design of energy efficiency measures for the 2014-2020 programming period

This interactive workshop was organised in cooperation with DG REGIO and DG ENERGY with the objective of supporting relevant authorities in Member States in designing and planning energy efficiency measures that could be included in the programming for the financial perspective 2014-2020.

The workshop provided details both on the state of play of negotiations and relevant requirements for the 2014-2020 programming exercise, specifically in relation to energy efficiency investments. It also showed how energy efficiency measures could play a pivotal role in the development of the new instrument of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI).

The European Commission provided a detailed presentation of its technical guidance on 'Financing the

energy renovation of buildings with Cohesion Policy funding', which is addressed at managing authorities planning to prepare and launch large-scale investments in the energy renovation of buildings. The guide highlights the technical expertise JASPERS can make available throughout the project cycle, as well as its possible support on horizontal issues and capacity-building activities through the Networking Platform.

Throughout the day, emphasis was placed on case studies, lessons learned from the 2007-2013 programming exercise, as well as concrete examples of possible financing structures. Finally, a roundtable gave the participants an opportunity to discuss the relevance of the topics covered and allowed an exchange of views and experience.

Based on the feedback received and the importance of these topics in the programming period 2014-2020, follow-up activities are planned for the 2015 work programme.



Requirements and lessons learned for nature protection in the preparation of large projects

This technical seminar aimed at presenting key regulatory requirements and concrete experiences highlighting the challenges associated with nature and biodiversity protection when preparing major projects funded by EU Structural and Investment Funds.

The event was developed in close coordination with DG Environment, which presented EU biodiversity policies and the requirements of the Birds and Habitats Directives, and then focused on the appropriate assessment procedure for projects potentially affecting Natura 2000 sites. The relationship between Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the appropriate assessment procedure was also explained in detail.

The seminar was targeted at coordinating bodies and environmental Managing Authorities, as well as relevant public departments dealing with EIA and SEA matters in all EU Member States.

Public officials from Ireland, Germany and Poland presented concrete examples of national practices and case studies, while JASPERS chaired a discussion on lessons learned from the 2007-2013 financial perspective with an outlook for the 2014-2020 period. The European Commission also presented the results of a fact-finding study on the permitting procedure related to Natura 2000 requirements and its recommendations for improving the efficiency of the procedure.

In light of the interest expressed by the participating authorities, follow-up seminars and dedicated training sessions on environmental requirements are planned for the 2015 Networking Platform work programme.

JASPERS publications and working papers

The JASPERS Networking Platform regularly publishes working papers, case studies, summaries of good practices and lessons learned, training materials and guidance documents relevant to the preparation and implementation of projects to be financed under the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

- > This knowledge base is disseminated through the Networking Platform web portal (www.jaspersnetwork.org).

JASPERS staff working papers are prepared by JASPERS experts with the aim of facilitating discussions with counterparts in the context of their different assignments, mostly in terms of project scoping and applicable criteria and methodology. These papers could originate as part of the assessment of a specific project, in which case the version published is edited to be made non-project and non-country specific and therefore easily applicable to other projects in the sector.



State aid modernisation and legal framework

Following a reform of the programme started in 2012 with the European Commission's Communication on State Aid Modernisation, a new state aid legal framework entered into force on 1 July 2014.

Ensuring compatibility with state aid rules is a key concern while preparing projects for financing under the Structural and Investment Funds, and Member States have regularly signalled a strong interest in having this cross-sectoral theme addressed in dedicated activities of the Networking Platform.

With this in mind, an interactive workshop was organised in July in cooperation with DG Competition, with the aim of presenting the key features of the new state aid legal framework relevant for the 2014-2020 programming period.

Representatives from the European Commission presented the main principles underlying the state aid modernisation process and its implications for the

financing of infrastructure projects in several sectors, including energy, environment and research, development and innovation. Participants were introduced to the details of the new General Block Exemption Regulation, which is the intended cornerstone of the new state aid legal framework, as well as state aid rules and compensation for services of general economic interest.

Key lessons learned and practical recommendations were highlighted, based on the experience acquired during the 2007-2013 programming period, and their relevance was discussed for the planning and preparation of programmes, projects and schemes for the new EU funding period.

Given the feedback received by participants and the interest expressed by Member States in follow-up activities, new dedicated workshops, seminars and training sessions are planned under the 2015 Networking Platform work programme.





Comprehensive transport plans and action plans in line with 2014-2020 ex ante requirements

The ex ante conditionalities included in the legal framework for the 2014-2020 programming period require Member States to ensure the existence of comprehensive transport plans and frameworks which comply with the requirements for strategic environmental assessment, set out their contribution to the single European Transport Area and include a realistic and mature project pipeline.

Based on the experience acquired working with some Member States on the preparation of transport strategies, JASPERS prepared a set of detailed guidance documents to support all interested national authorities in planning transport investments and

help them fulfil the requirements of transport ex ante conditionalities (see box on page 15).

These detailed guidance documents were prepared in coordination with the Commission and in compliance with available DG REGIO guidelines, and were presented in a workshop in October 2014.

The workshop was targeted at representatives from Member States' authorities in charge of transport programmes, in particular those involved in the area of strategic planning, and included presentations by some Member States and JASPERS on the main challenges and obstacles faced in developing Transport Plans and how these have been addressed.

JASPERS also presented guiding principles on the preparation of action plans, which describe the programme of activities that are proposed to meet the ex ante requirements by the deadline of 31 December 2016.



Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management for the water sector

This initiative aimed at raising awareness of the principles for sound planning, development and preparation of risk management and climate change adaptation projects to be financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds in 2014-2020, with a specific focus on water sector infrastructure. It also aimed at supporting national authorities in the fulfilment of the ex ante conditionality on the existence of national and regional risk assessments for disaster management, taking into account climate change adaptation considerations.

In coordination with the Commission, JASPERS organised in October 2014 an interactive workshop targeted at representatives from Member States' authorities dealing with the planning, preparation and implementation of water infrastructure and related risk management projects.

Officials from DG ECHO, DG CLIMA and DG REGIO described in detail EU policy objectives, regulatory requirements linked to the preparation of large investments in climate resilient infrastructure, as well as the key features of risk management plans to meet the applicable ex ante conditions. Speakers from the UK and Sweden highlighted good practice principles of climate change risk planning at both national and regional level.

The workshop provided the opportunity to clarify that climate change risk assessments at both national and regional level should not be approached as an isolated exercise but rather as an important step feeding the project development process, with the goal of justifying the need and scope for specific interventions.

Given the substantial interest expressed by Member States in follow-up activities addressing this topic and its implication for other sectors, new workshops, seminars and training sessions are planned under the 2015 Networking Platform work programme.

JASPERS guidance documents for the preparation of National and Regional Transport Plans

Planning transport investments is always complex. To support Member States and help them prepare comprehensive transport plans by the end of 2016*, JASPERS has prepared a guidance document “Methodological support to the preparation of National and Regional Transport Plans” in collaboration with national experts and the European Commission.

National authorities may choose to follow the suggested methodology to measure market gaps and propose solutions which not only combine various transport modes in the most economic and environmentally sustainable way possible, but also integrate European, national, trans-national, regional and sectoral interests into one global plan, irrespective of the various sources of funding. Investment needs should derive from transport policy and strategy, which in

turn should translate into a robust pipeline of projects.

In practical terms, this guidance document provides key principles and recommendations drawing on JASPERS’ experience in the various countries and includes an empirical check-list. Further guidance may be found in a separate document entitled “The Use of Transport Models in Transport Planning and Project Appraisal”.

Both guidance documents are available in the library of the JASPERS Networking Platform web portal (www.jaspersnetwork.org).

* as required by the European Commission in Annex XI of Regulation 1303/2013, and elaborated in the EU Guidance on Ex Ante Conditionalities: Part II





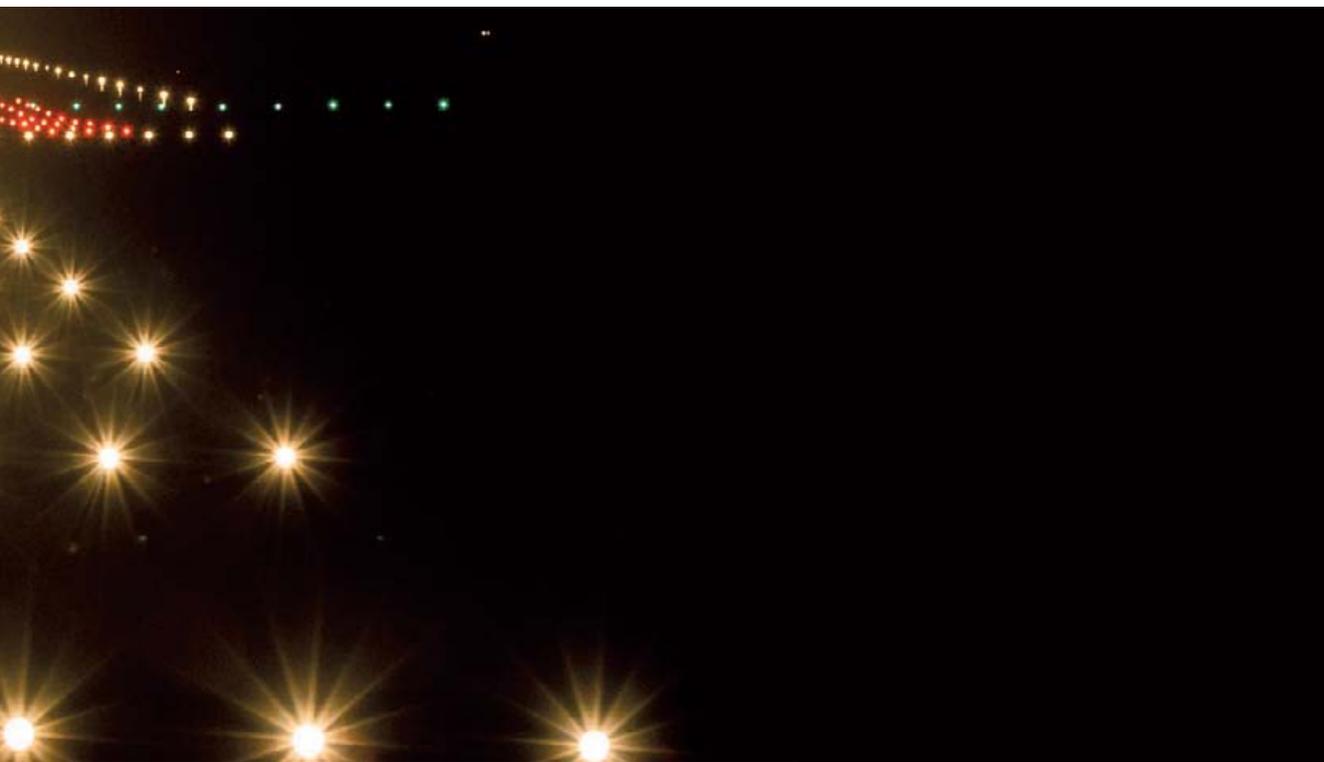
Cost-benefit analysis methodologies for the 2014-2020 programming period

In the 2007-2013 programming period, JASPERS contributed to the development and dissemination of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) methodologies for investment projects, both through horizontal advisory and capacity-building activities and by supporting the verification of the application of the CBA methodology at project level in many advisory assignments. JASPERS provided support to Member States on CBA and related methodologies, in particular with the development of national CBA guidelines, both general and sectorial,

and the publication of various related guidance documents and working papers.

In view of its extensive experience of CBA matters, JASPERS was invited by DG REGIO to cooperate in the preparation of the elements of the general CBA methodology required by the Regulation, as well as the updated version of the more extensive EU Guide to CBA for Investment Projects, which develops the methodological guidance in greater detail, including on the specificities of individual sectors.

JASPERS contributed to the preparation of the Guide to CBA as technical advisor to DG REGIO, focusing on the practical issues related to the CBA of major infrastructure projects. In particular, besides peer review-



ing the drafting of the Guide, JASPERS contributed by highlighting best practice and common mistakes in carrying out CBA as well as helping with the design and development of the seven case studies included in the Guide.

Given the substantial interest expressed by Member States in activities addressing this topic, dedicated workshops, seminars and training sessions are planned under the 2015 Networking Platform work programme.

In addition, JASPERS will participate in CBA forums organised by DG REGIO for exchanging good practices, improve stakeholders' knowledge and support the effective application of CBA methodologies to specific investment projects.

Ad hoc seminars and training events

Apart from activities and public events open to wider participation, the JASPERS Networking Platform organises each year a series of ad hoc internal roundtables to discuss lessons learned and issues of common interest, particularly in anticipation of activities to be performed during the 2014-2020 programming period. These meetings prove a very useful tool to initiate discussions with the European Commission on key topics, as well as to clarify policy issues, with the goal of ensuring a consistent approach to JASPERS' advice and supported activities.

The implementation of ad hoc roundtables and seminars will be continued during 2015.

Networking Platform interactive web portal

Jaspers Network Knowledge and Learning Center

Home About us Events Resources

Partners and Members
 JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) provides technical expertise for any stage of the project cycle, covering technical, economic and financial questions. It is geared to providing advice, ensuring coordination, developing and reviewing project structures, removing [...]

LATEST NEWS

- 20/05/2015 Workshop on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in projects
- 20/05/2015 Launch event of the Guide to Cost-Benefit Analysis of Investment Projects
- 24/02/2015 Workshop on supporting investments in Smart Grids in 2014-2020

EVENTS

August 2015

mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat	sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

August 3rd events:

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

- 19/12/2014 DG REGIO CBA Guide for 2014-2020
- 17/08/2014 Methodological support to the preparation of National and Regional Transport Plans
- 17/08/2014 The Use of Transport Models in Transport Planning and Project Appraisal

The JASPERS Networking Platform web portal was launched in early 2013 and is accessible at the following web address: www.jaspersnetwork.org.

This portal is regularly updated and used as a channel for the dissemination of information, news and documentation related to the Networking Platform's operations and activities. Summaries and materials developed and disseminated during workshops and other initiatives are made available on the web portal.

In 2014, the JASPERS' Networking Platform portal was extensively used by JASPERS' stakeholders and other visitors, with a substantial increase of activity compared to the first year of operation.

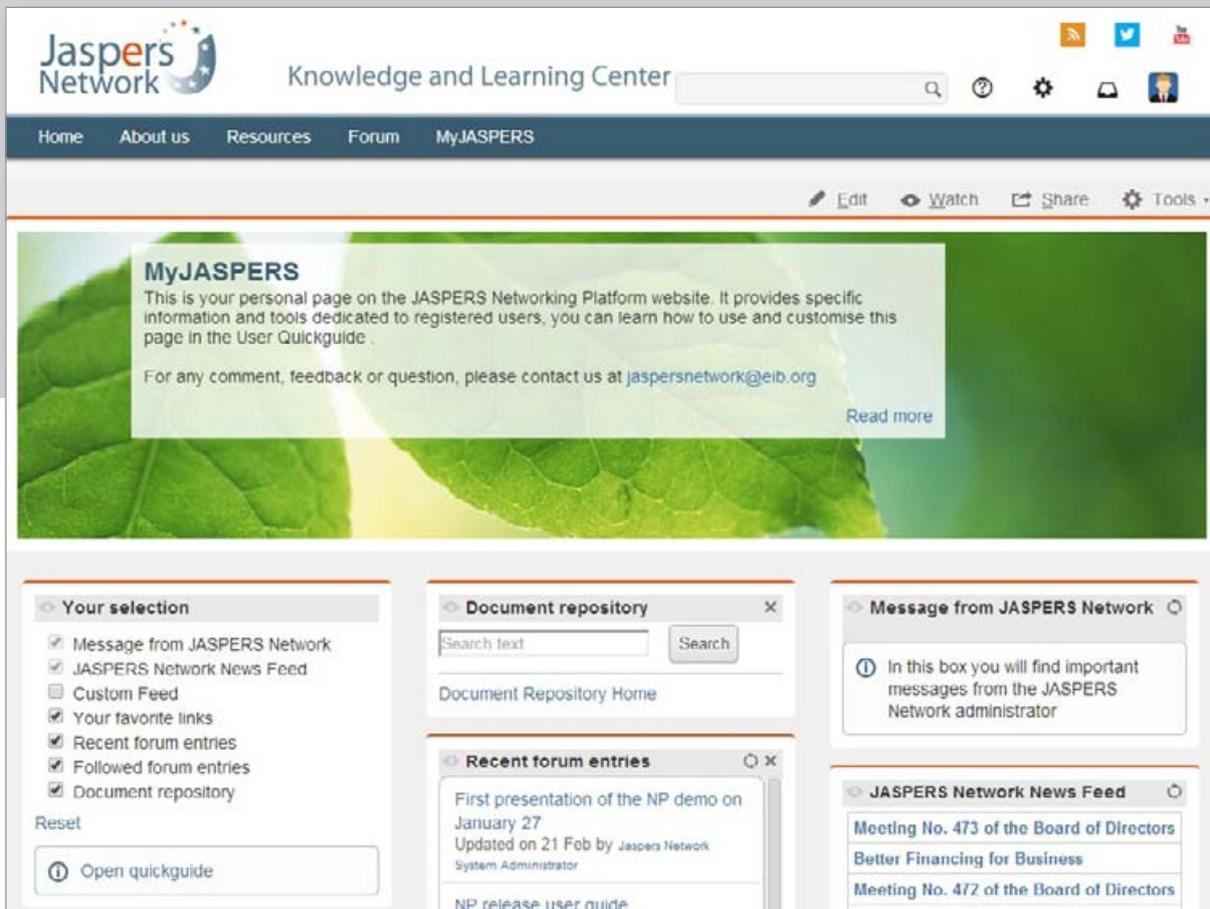
Some relevant statistics for 2014 are provided below:

- 5 336 visits (a 45% increase compared to 2013, with an average of over 440 visits/month) from both JASPERS and non-JASPERS supported countries;
- 39 715 page views (+123% compared to 2013);
- 6 166 downloads (+43% compared to 2013).

A new release of the Networking Platform portal providing enhanced and more user-friendly access to its knowledge library and allowing registered members to access interactive features (forums, comments, online discussions and working groups, dedicated member areas) was launched in July 2014.

www.jaspersnetwork.org

The Networking Platform web portal facilitates networking and collaboration, as well as the dissemination of JASPERS guidance, capacity-building documents, horizontal studies and other relevant guidelines and best practices.



Annexes





Annex 1 – List of institutions attending Networking Platform activities and events in 2014 (non-exhaustive)

Country/Organisation	Institution/Directorate
European Commission	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
	Directorate-General for the Environment
	Directorate-General for Climate Action
	Directorate-General for Competition
	Directorate-General for Enlargement
	Directorate-General for Energy
	Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
	Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
	Innovation and Networks Executive Agency
JASPERS Partners	European Investment Bank
	EBRD
Belgium	Flemish Research Institute for Nature and Forests
	Flemish Environment, Nature and Energy Department
	Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU
Bulgaria	Council of Ministers - Central Coordination Unit
	Permanent Representation of Bulgaria to the EU
	Ministry of Environment and Water
	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
	Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communication
	National Railways Infrastructure Company
Croatia	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
	Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure
	Ministry of Science, Education and Sports
	Ministry of Agriculture
	Ministry of Transport
	Croatian Water Company
	Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund
	Permanent Representation of Croatia to the EU
Czech Republic	Ministry of Environment
	Ministry of Finance
	Ministry of Industry and Trade
	Ministry of Regional Development
	Ministry of Transport
	City of Prague
Estonia	Ministry of Environment
France	Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires
	DATAR

Country/Organisation	Institution/Directorate
Greece	Ministry of Development and Competitiveness
	Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change
	Managing Authority of Western Macedonia Region
	Managing Authority - OP Accessibility Improvement
	Alexander Innovation Zone S.A.
Hungary	Prime Minister's Office
	National Development Agency
	Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU
	Ministry of National Development
	Ministry of Rural Development
Italy	Protezione Civile
Latvia	Ministry of Finance
	Permanent Representation of Latvia to the EU
	Ministry of Economy
	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development
	Latvian Environmental State Bureau
Lithuania	Ministry of Finance
	Ministry of Environment
	Ministry of Energy
	Public Investment Development Agency
	Transport Investment Directorate
Malta	Ministry for European Affairs
	Transport Malta
	Ministry for Energy
Montenegro	Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs
	Mission of Montenegro to the EU
Poland	Ministry of Infrastructure and Development
	Ministry of Environment
	National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management
	Ministry of Economy
	National Forestry
	General Directorate for Environmental Protection
	Lubuskie Region
	Wielkopolska Region
	Podlaskie Region
Portugal	Secretary of State for Energy's Office
	General Directorate for Energy and Geology
	Managing Authority - OP Territorial Enhancement
	Permanent Representation of Portugal to the EU

Country/Organisation	Institution/Directorate
Romania	Ministry of European Funds Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration Ministry of Communications and Information Society Ministry of National Education National Authority for Scientific Research Romanian Waters National Administration
Slovak Republic	Ministry of Transport, Communications and Public Works Ministry of Environment Ministry of the Interior Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU National Agency for Networking and Electronic Services
Slovenia	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning Ministry of Economic Development and Technology Ministry of Infrastructure
Spain	Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU Extremadura Energy Cluster Basque Government EU Representation Office Government of Catalonia - Delegation to the EU
Sweden	Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU
Turkey	Ministry of EU Affairs Permanent Delegation of Turkey to the European Union
United Kingdom	The Greater London Authority

Annex 2 – Participation in Networking Platform activities in 2013 and feedback received

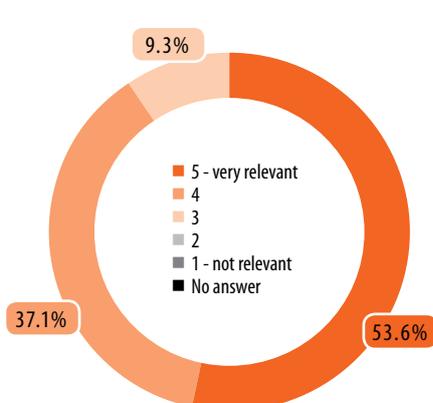
In 2014 the JASPERS Networking Platform organised six main public events, including its Annual Meeting. These events saw the participation of 369 representatives, largely from Member States' authorities, as well as JASPERS partners and other Commission Services.

Attendance at JASPERS Networking Platform main activities in 2014		
	Participants	%
JASPERS experts	48	13.0%
JASPERS partners	10	2.7%
European Commission	81	22.0%
Member States	230	62.3%
TOTAL	369	100%

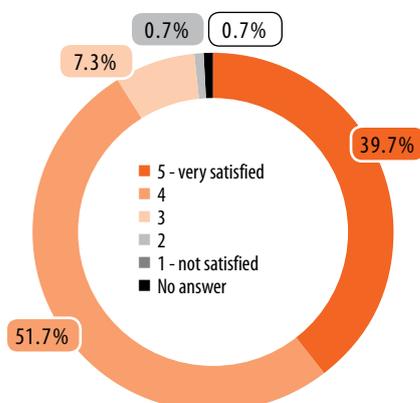
Feedback was systematically collected on the relevance and usefulness of the activities performed as well as on topics of interest for follow-up operations, and it was overwhelmingly positive.

Based on a total of 151 feedback forms voluntarily submitted by participants at 2014 main events, 90.7% of the respondents judged as very relevant or relevant the topics covered by the JASPERS Networking Platform, and 91.4% were very satisfied or satisfied with the methodology chosen to address these topics.

Relevance of topics addressed by the Networking Platform

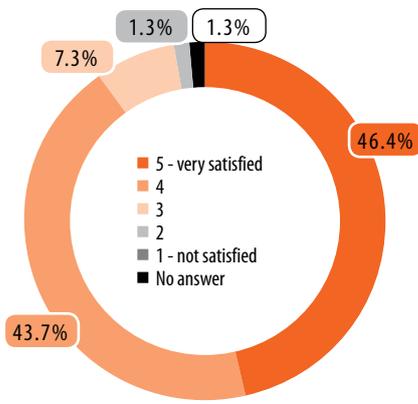


Satisfaction about the approach chosen to implement the activities

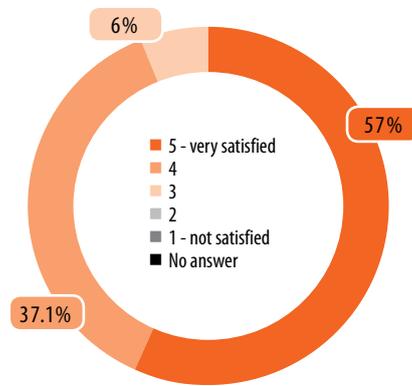


Satisfaction was also high regarding the format of the main events as well as their organisation.

Satisfaction about the format of events

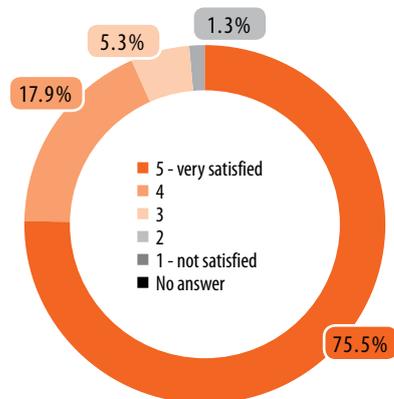


Satisfaction about the organisation of events

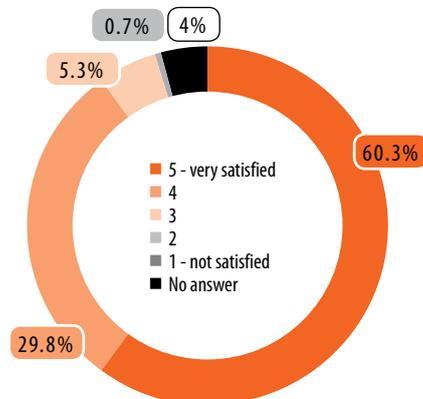


Last but not least, the assessment of the feedback received confirmed very strong interest in the JASPERS Networking Platform and in its future activities (99% of respondents being very interested or interested), including access to the Networking Platform web portal.

Interest in future activities under the Networking Platform



Interest in accessing the JASPERS Network web portal



Annex 3 – JASPERS working papers published in 2014

The JASPERS Networking Platform regularly publishes working papers, case studies, best practices, training materials and guidance documents relevant to the preparation and implementation of projects to be financed under the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

All publications are available in the relevant section of the JASPERS Networking Platform web portal (www.jaspersnetwork.org).

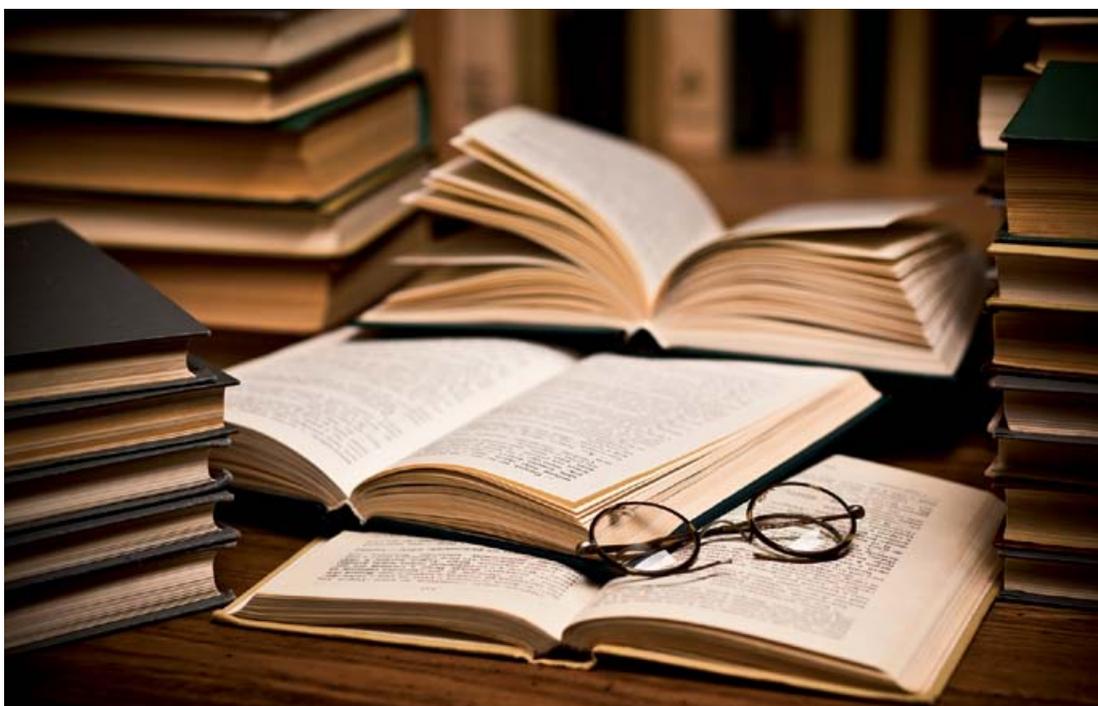
The following working papers were published during 2014:

1. Methodological support to the preparation of National and Regional Transport Plans

This particular paper provides methodological support – on the basis of JASPERS' experience in several Member States – on the approach that may be followed to develop a Comprehensive Transport Plan according to the requirements set for the programming period 2014-2020.

2. The use of transport models in transport planning and project appraisal

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance for the development of transport models for use in the development and appraisal of transport projects where a suitable national guidance document does not exist.



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For information on JASPERS, please visit:
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