



Tionól Réigiúnach
an Deiscirt

Southern Regional
Assembly

Annual Report & Financial Statements

2022

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Cathaoirleach's Message

As Cathaoirleach, it is my privilege to introduce the 2022 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Southern Regional Assembly.

I took over as Cathaoirleach in July 2022, following from my predecessor, Cllr Pip Breen, during a period when the COVID 19 pandemic was still having an impact, albeit to a lesser extent. I commend my fellow members and the staff of the Assembly for their continued commitment to deliver excellent service during another busy year and with the expanding role of the Assembly.

Implementation of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region is progressing, with some important outputs delivered through the year. In September, I had the privilege of launching a new initiative to develop a UNESCO Learning Region for the entire Southern Region. Taking place in City Hall in Waterford, the event was attended by key stakeholders including Waterford City and County Council, South East Technological University, the ETBs in the Southern Region, representatives of Cork and Limerick Learning Cities and UNESCO. In addition, together with the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly and the Northern & Western Regional Assembly, Minister Peter Burke launched the Regional Development Monitor (RDM) in December. The RDM will support the future implementation of the RSES, the NPF and Project Ireland 2040. December also saw the announcement of the approval by the European Commission of the new Regional Programme co-funded by the ERDF, covering the Southern Region and the Eastern & Midland Region.



I would like to thank my fellow Assembly Members for their invaluable contributions during the year both at our monthly meetings and in representing the Assembly at other meetings and events. I also wish to thank Leas-Cathaoirleach, Cllr Andrew McGuinness for his support.

I extend my sincere appreciation to David Kelly and his team for their continued work across all functions of the Southern Regional Assembly.

**Cllr Oliver Walsh,
Cathaoirleach.**

Director's Statement

I am delighted to present the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Southern Regional Assembly for 2022. The report details a busy year of activities and achievements which contribute towards the objectives of our Corporate Plan.

We continued to progress the implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, with several key initiatives moving forward. In a partnership between the three Regional Assemblies, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) (GeoHive), we developed a Regional Development Monitor (RDM) to provide a monitoring system and an online mapping viewer for key indicators of progress towards balanced regional development. This is a significant new planning innovation in Ireland and was officially launched by Minister Peter Burke in December.

In September, the ambition for the Southern Region to be designated as a UNESCO Learning Region took a further step forward, with the launch of the Towards a Learning Region Initiative. This event, hosted in City Hall, Waterford was attended by representatives from UNESCO, along with key stakeholders from Higher and Further Education sectors, local authorities, and community organisations. In addition, we also advanced initiatives on blue green infrastructure & nature-based solutions and on a smart region. All of these amongst others, with collaboration and support across all key stakeholders in the region, advance the ambitions set out in the RSES, to be one of the most Creative & Innovative, Green and Liveable Regions.

Our role in promoting and supporting balanced regional development through the management and oversight of EU funding has been equally busy during 2022. Whilst continuing to manage the delivery of over €600 million of investment through the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20, we also secured approval for a new €663m programme for the Southern Region and the Eastern & Midland Region. This will focus investment to help create quality jobs, transition to low carbon, and support higher education, enterprises, public bodies, and local authorities in delivering balanced regional development.



The Assembly continued its involvement in Interreg programmes, particularly Interreg Europe, Interreg North-West Europe and the Ireland Wales Programme in terms of participating as active project partners and by supporting other Irish organisations and partner's participation through the excellent support of our National Contact Points and Development Officers. Our First Level Control team audited EU project claims ensuring Irish partners received their Interreg Grants during the year.

I would like to thank our Cathaoirleach, Cllr Oliver Walsh for his time and input during the year. I thank the Assembly staff for their continued commitment and dedication to achieving the goals of the 2022 Annual Work Plan. I welcome the new staff who joined the Assembly in 2022 and thank those who have moved on.

Finally, I look forward to our continued engagement with key stakeholders including local authorities, government departments and agencies and the third level sector as the role of the Assembly continues to evolve to support our region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Kelly". The signature is stylized and fluid.

David Kelly,
Director.

■ SEM Partnership Agreement with EU for Cohesion Funds 2021-27 (September 2022)

Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms and Michael McGrath, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform launching the Cohesion Funds Partnership Agreement for Ireland for 2021-27.



About the Southern Regional Assembly

Established in 2015, the Southern Regional Assembly is part of the regional tier of government in Ireland.

The Assembly forges links between the EU, and national and local levels through regional spatial and economic planning and European funding (particularly the European Regional Development Fund) for the benefit of the Southern Region. We are responsible for strategic regional and economic planning and supporting balanced, sustainable regional development.

- Regional tier of government, represented by elected representatives nominated by our local authorities and the Committee of the Regions,
- Leading the implementation of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy,
- Promoting balanced regional development through the management of, support for, and involvement in European Regional Development Funded programmes and projects,
- Linking local, regional, national and EU policy goals through regional planning and EU regional development.



Cathaoirleach Cllr Oliver Walsh, the Assembly Members and staff at the Annual Meeting in July 2022.

The Assembly interacts with national government, state agencies, local authorities, and stakeholders from the private and the third sectors at local, regional, national and EU levels in relation to its statutory functions.

VISION

A Region that is economically strong, inclusive, connected, climate-resilient and sustainable.

MISSION

To be the leader of regional development through effective, sustainable spatial planning and the delivery of EU programmes, with the support of our stakeholders.

VALUES

**Leadership
Engagement
Innovation
Equality
Sustainability
Transparency**

Assembly Membership 2022

The Southern Region is represented by 33 Local Councillors who were appointed as Regional Assembly Members for a five-year term following the 2019 local elections. The Region’s ten local authorities nominate 27 Members, and the Government appoints six as Committee of the Regions representatives.

Southern Regional Assembly Members 2022

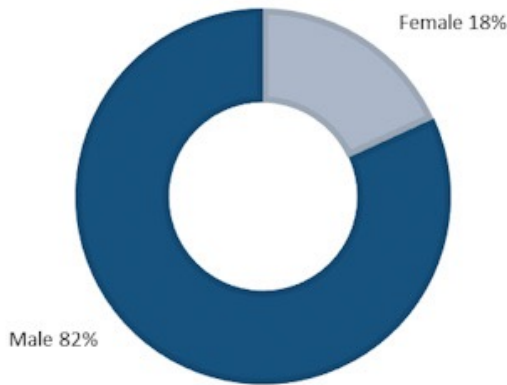
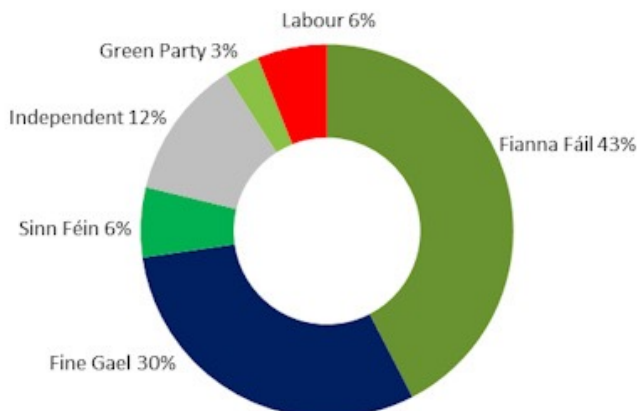
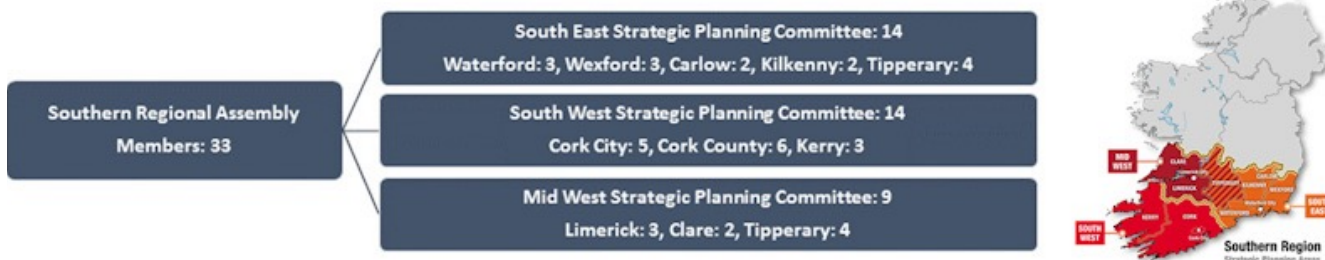
Cllr Oliver Walsh	Wexford County Council	Cllr Michael O’ Shea	Kerry County Council
Cllr Andrew McGuinness	Kilkenny County Council	Cllr Robert Beasley	Kerry County Council
Cllr Gerard Murphy	Cork County Council	Cllr Frankie Daly	Limerick City & County Council
Cllr Ken Murnane	Carlow County Council	Cllr Michael Collins	Limerick City & County Council
Cllr Thomas Kinsella	Carlow County Council	Cllr John Sheahan	Limerick City & County Council
Cllr Alan O’ Callaghan	Clare County Council	Cllr John Brennan	Kilkenny County Council
Cllr P.J. Kelly	Clare County Council	Cllr Michael Murphy	Tipperary County Council (COR Rep)
Cllr Deirdre Forde	Cork City Council (COR Rep)	Cllr Noel Coonan	Tipperary County Council
Cllr Kieran McCarthy	Cork City Council (COR Rep)	Cllr Siobhan Ambrose	Tipperary County Council
Cllr Dan Boyle	Cork City Council (COR Rep)	Cllr Michael O’ Meara	Tipperary County Council
Cllr Terry Shannon	Cork City Council	Cllr Conor. D McGuinness	Waterford City & Co. Council (COR Rep) (alt)
Cllr Garret Kelleher	Cork City Council	Cllr Thomas Phelan	Waterford City & Co. Council
Cllr Gillian Coughlan	Cork County Council (alt)	Cllr Tom Cronin	Waterford City & Co. Council
Cllr Sheila O’ Callaghan	Cork County Council	Cllr Maura Bell	Wexford County Council
Cllr Deirdre O’ Brien	Cork County Council	Cllr Pip Breen	Wexford County Council
Cllr Joe Carroll	Cork County Council		
Cllr Sean O’ Connor	Cork County Council		
Cllr Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald	Kerry County Council		

Cathaoirigh

- July-December: Cllr Oliver Walsh
- January-July: Cllr Pip Breen

Leas-Cathaoirigh

- July-December: Cllr Andrew McGuinness
- January-July: Cllr Gerard Murphy



Membership Activity 2022



Meetings 2022

21st January	13th May	14th October
11th February	10th June	11th November
11th March	8th July	9th December
8th April	9th September	

86%
86% Average meeting attendance rate

External Speakers at Assembly Meetings 2022

Month	Speaker/ Topic
January	Eoghan McCarthy – All- Island Research Observatory (AIRO): Presentation on Regional Development Monitor.
February	Sarah Ni Ruairc, Neil Gannon & Dr. Rob Mooney – Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications (DECC): Presentation on Climate Action Plan.
March	Dr. Mike Brennan – Eastern Midland Regional Assembly & Martha Halbert – RAPID Co-Ordinator Cork City Council: Presentation on URBACT.
April	Dr. Niall Connolly – Assistant Professor in Innovation & Entrepreneurship Maynooth University, Vice Chair All Ireland Smart City Forum: Presentation on Smart Region Framework.
May	Teresa Lennon of the Irish Regions European Office (IREO): Presentation on IREO Update. Emma Oldroyd – ARUP: Presentation on Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) & Nature Based Solutions (Nbs) Framework.
June	Dr. Brendan O’ Keeffe – The International Centre for Local and Regional Development (ICLRD): The 21st Century Councillor in Irish Local Government. Com O’ Mahony & Colin Simpson – 3CEA: Empower & Energy Poverty Handbook.
October	Justin Gleeson – AIRO Maynooth University: Presentation on the Regional Development Monitor.
November	Philip Newsome & Alana Johnston, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), – Presentation on the Climate Action Plan & Renewable Energy Transformation.
December	Aoife Fleming, Teresa Fallon & Aoife O’ Grady – Department of Transports (DoT): Presentation on EV Infrastructure Strategy: Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland and Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) Pathfinder Projects.

Conference Attendance 2022

June 2022	Just Transition Conference, Tullamore	Cllr D. O'Brien, Cllr G. Murphy
October 2022	Towards a Learning Region, Waterford	Cllr J. Brennan, Cllr S.C. Fitzgerald, Cllr M. O' Shea, Cllr J. Carroll, Cllr D. O' Brien
October 2022	Ireland's Future Conference, Dublin	Cllr PJ O' Kelly, Cllr D. O'Brien, Cllr A O' Callaghan

EU Programmes Monitoring Committee Representatives

Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-20	Southern Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-2027	Cllr Oliver Walsh Cllr John Brennan Cllr Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald Cllr Michael O'Shea
Ireland-Wales Programme 2014-20		Cllr Ken Murnane
Rural Development Programme 2014-20	CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2027	Cllr Alan O'Callaghan
European Social Fund: Programme for Employability Inclusion & Learning 2014-20	ESF+ Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training (EIST) 2021-2027	Cllr Gerard Murphy

Committee of the Regions Representatives: Southern Region

Six Assembly Members are also Committee of the Regions representatives, three as full Members and three as Alternative Members. For further information, see Section 10.

Association of Irish Regions Representatives: Southern Region

The Association of Irish Regions is the national representative organisation of the three Regional Assemblies in Ireland, as a vehicle to ensure a collective opinion on matters related to Member functions and statutory responsibilities and to exchange information and experience between the regions. Southern Region representatives include:



Left to Right: Cllr. Pip Breen, Cllr. Gerard Murphy, Cllr. Oliver Walsh & Cllr. Andrew McGuinness.

Cllr Oliver Walsh - Cathaoirleach	Cllr John Sheahan (to Sept 22)
Cllr Andrew McGuinness - Leas Cathaoirleach	Cllr Gerard Murphy (to Sept 22)
Cllr Pip Breen - previous Cathaoirleach	Cllr Thomas Phelan
Cllr Michael O' Meara	David Kelly Director

Corporate Update 2022

2022 was an exceptionally busy year for the Regional Assembly Members and staff as activity continued across EU programmes, EU projects and in Regional Planning.

Annual Meeting & Election of Cathaoirleach 2022-23

The Annual Meeting took place on 8th July as a hybrid meeting. Members were in attendance both online and in the Chamber in Assembly House.

Cllr Oliver Walsh was elected Cathaoirleach of the Southern Regional Assembly at the meeting. Cllr Walsh has been a Fine Gael local representative for Wexford County Council since 2001.

Cllr Andrew McGuinness was elected Leas-Cathaoirleach. A member of Fianna Fail, Cllr McGuinness has been a local representative for Kilkenny County Council since 2014.



Cathaoirleach Cllr Oliver Walsh, the Assembly Members and staff at the Annual Meeting in July 2022.

Southern Regional Assembly 2022 Highlights:

1. Launch of the Regional Development Monitor:

In partnership with the other two Regional Assemblies, the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) and Ordnance Survey Ireland (GeoHive), the Assembly has developed a Regional Development Monitor (RDM) to provide a monitoring system and an online mapping viewer for key indicators of progress towards balanced regional development. This is a significant new planning innovation in Ireland and was officially launched by Minister Peter Burke in December.

The RDM collates and presents a range of relevant socio-economic indicators to assist with monitoring the performance of each region in terms of achieving the objectives outlined in their respective RSES. The development of the RDM will support the future implementation of the RSES, the NPF and Project Ireland 2040 as well as being of practical use to local authorities, agencies, and the public.



Enda Hogan, David Kelly, Cllr Pip Breen, Dominic Walsh & Kevin Lynch at the RDM Launch.

2. Approval of the new ERDF Regional Programme:

The Minister for Public Expenditure, Michael McGrath TD announced the European Commission's formal approval of a new €663m investment package for regional development across two Irish regions – the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region – in November 2022.

The European Commission formally approved the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-27, which is managed by the Southern Regional Assembly and will invest €265 million ERDF and €398 million from the Government of Ireland into research and development, energy poverty and sustainable urban development activities across and between both regions.



David Kelly, Cllr Robert Power, Minister Michael McGrath, Helena Stromberg and Cllr Pip Breen.

The Programme will support significant collaboration between researchers and enterprises from across both the Southern Region and Eastern and Midland Region, building capacity and supporting local, regional, and national economies.

The Programme will support research institutions, the newly established Technological Universities (TU), regional enterprises, households and local towns and communities.

3. Launch of the Learning Region:

The launch of Towards a Learning Region was held in Waterford City Hall in September. The Southern Region is moving towards becoming a UNESCO Learning Region, the first of its kind in the world.

Speakers highlighted that the current level of participation in Lifelong Learning is a major weakness in the Southern Region and that there is a substantial gap to bridge to compete with European leaders. Lifelong Learning is where learning activity is undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills, and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. Given the transformations expected in almost all industries with the disruption of new technologies and digitalisation, educational providers and public bodies believe that higher participation levels in Lifelong Learning is essential in developing an agile skills and talent workforce.

To address this weakness and to enhance the skills and talent proposition of the Southern Region, the Southern Regional Assembly together with regional stakeholders across Higher Education Institutes, Further Education and Training and community education, co-produced Towards a Learning Region.

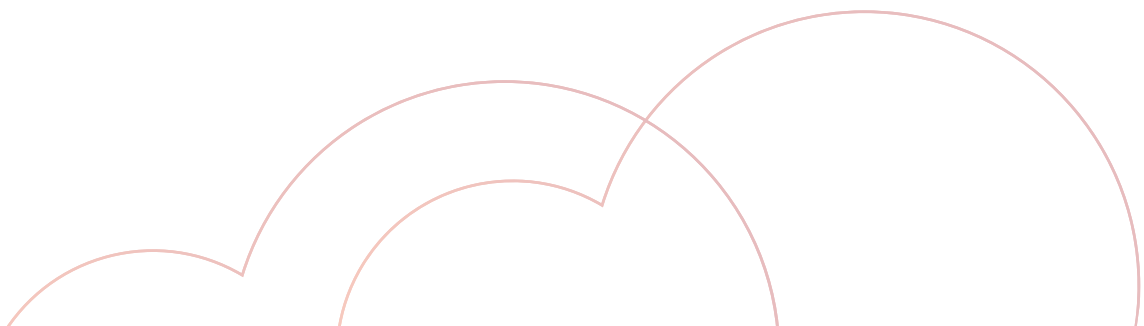
Inspired by the Southern Region’s existing UNESCO Learning cities of Cork and Limerick, the purpose of this initiative is to maximise the growth of the Regions human capital base by expanding the UNESCO principles across the entirety of the Southern Region. Towards a Learning Region has identified 19 actions to make this a reality.



■ Cllr Jason Murphy, Metropolitan Mayor of Waterford and Cathaoirleach, Cllr Oliver Walsh at the Towards a Learning Region Launch.



■ Discussion panel at the Towards a Learning Region Launch.



4. EU Commissioners Visit:

The Mayor of Waterford, Cllr John O’Leary, welcomed the European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, to Waterford City on Monday 19th September to see first-hand some excellent examples of how supports from the EU Funds have enhanced the City in so many ways. The Mayor and the Cathaoirleach of the Southern Regional Assembly, Cllr Oliver Walsh accompanied the Commissioner along the Viking Triangle toward the Apple Market to see how the space is used today after regeneration support from the ERDF Southern & Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20.

Since 2014, the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme, which is managed by the Southern Regional Assembly in the City, has delivered supports worth €621 million in the form of supports to micro-enterprises, research and commercialisation activities, low carbon initiatives, rapid funding response to the pandemic, and sustainable urban development projects, such as the Apple Market.

Commissioner Ferreira travelled on to meet SETU Waterford researchers, to hear about the wide variety of research being carried out at the newly appointed Technological University which has been supported by the ERDF, Interreg, or other EU programmes.

The Commissioner also met with the enthusiastic students at Youthreach on O’Connell Street to listen to their experiences and opinions on their education.



■ Cllr Oliver Walsh, Commissioner Elisa Ferreira and Cllr John O’Leary visiting the Apple Market in Waterford City.



■ Kathryn Kiely SETU, Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, Dr Mark White SETU, Dr Geraldine Canny SETU & Rose Power visiting SETU.

Southern Regional Assembly Publications during 2022

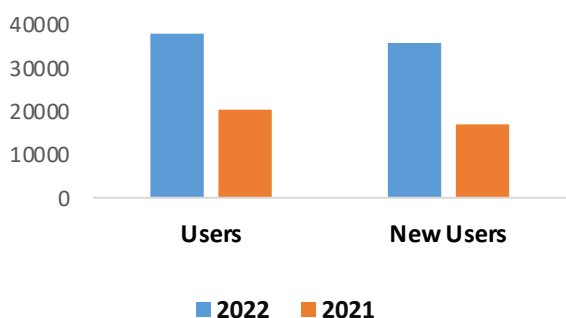
The Assembly published the following documents during 2022, either solely or in association with other organisations and consultants.



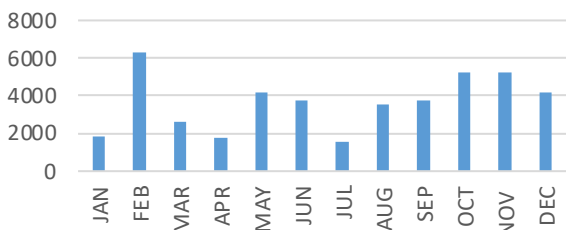
Online Communications 2022

-  2,897 followers. Average 40k monthly impressions
-  499 followers. Average post reach 353
-  397 followers. Average post reach 95
-  236 followers. Average 1000 monthly impressions

southernassembly.ie

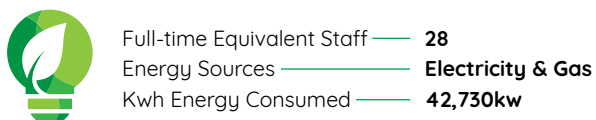


Sessions



Energy Usage 2022

Ireland’s Climate Action Plan 2019 sets a target of 50% improved energy efficiency across the public sector by 2030, and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy delivers a 30% emissions reduction by 2030, and a commitment to develop a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050. The Assembly reports yearly on energy performance to the SEAI to track energy efficiency improvements.



The South East Energy Agency conducted an Energy Audit on the Southern Regional Assembly in 2022.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2014 provides that every person has legal right to access official records held by public bodies, have personal information held on them corrected or updated where it is incomplete, incorrect, or misleading, and be given reasons for decisions taken by public bodies that affect them.

- Requests	3
- Granted	3
- Part-Granted	0
- Refused	0
- Withdrawn	0
- Carried to 2022	0

Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act both came into effect in 2018. The Assembly continues to review operations against this statutory requirement. There were no requests under data protection legislation during 2022.

Irish Language

Sarah Davoren acts as our Irish Language Officer since her appointment in May 2021.

Assembly Staff Changes

In January 2022, Enda Hogan took over from Dave Hennessy as Assistant Director (EU Programmes & Corporate Affairs). Siobhan Rudden, Karen Coughlan, and Rose Power were appointed as Administrative Officers in the EU Division in May 2022. Brigh Ryan took over from Bryan Riney as Regional Planning Officer in December 2022. Marie Harnett was appointed as Senior Staff Officer – Corporate Affairs in September 2022. Elayne McDonnell, Lisa Moran and Áine Whelan joined the Assembly in September 2022 as First Level Controller and Project Officers. We wish all our colleagues who have moved to new chapters the very best.

IHREC

The Southern Regional Assembly is conscious of Human Rights and Equality across all its work, and as an organisation. Throughout 2022, the EU programme staff completed the IHREC public sector duty of care training, and organised planning workshops with partners who are due to receive funding under the ERDF Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme, including SEAI, Enterprise Ireland and Higher Education Authority. The online workshops held between October and December 2022 considered how future programmes might integrate the EU Cohesion Policy Horizontal Principles of inclusion, equality, and human rights into their everyday work for the Southern and Eastern Midlands Regional Programme.

Corporate Plan 2020-24

The Southern Regional Assembly's Corporate Plan 2020-24 is delivered against three high-level goals.



Progress 2022

11 statutory meetings of the Southern Regional Assembly

86% average attendance at statutory Assembly Meetings 2022

RSES Two Year Monitoring Report Launched

1 Southern Regional Assembly annual report published

8 submissions to local authority draft city & county development plan processes in the Southern Region (2022)

8 submissions to other local, regional, national, and European public consultations (2022)

€230.1m declared by beneficiaries to the ERDF S&E Regional Programme 2014-20

€11.5m in EU project claims by Irish partners audited by First Level Control

23 cross-border Interreg projects approved by the Ireland Wales Programme 2014-20

52 transnational Interreg projects approved by Interreg North-West Europe 2014-20 with Irish partners

6 interregional Interreg Europe projects with Southern Regional Assembly partner participation

1 Horizon 2020 programme project with Southern Regional Assembly partner participation.

2 meetings of the Southern Region ETC Project Officers Network facilitated by the Southern Regional Assembly

Regional Planning & RSES

The Local Government Act 1991 (Regional Assemblies) (Establishment) Order 2014 introduced a strong role for the Southern Regional Assembly in relation to spatial planning and economic development of the Southern Region.

The Assembly's main strategic planning function involves the preparation, adoption, and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. It also has an oversight role for the preparation of Local Economic & Community Plans (LECP) and the preparation of statutory submissions on City & County Development Plans (CCDP).

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The RSES published in January 2020 is a 12-year strategic regional development framework for the way our society, environment, economy, and the use of land should evolve. It includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for Cork, Limerick-Shannon & Waterford, and strategies for our Key Towns, towns, villages, and rural areas. The RSES aims to support the delivery of the programme for change set out in Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan 2018-27 (NDP).

Monitoring & Reporting

In September 2022, the Southern Regional Assembly published its first RSES Monitoring Report. Every two years, the Assembly will prepare a monitoring report on the progress in securing the objectives of the RSES. The report involved submission of reports from all ten local authorities and public bodies and has presented a valuable opportunity to examine the effectiveness of implementation to date as well as looking at the barriers to progress.

Key conclusions for the next implementation period are as follows:

- The positive impact of new initiatives and funding mechanisms by Government and Public Bodies in support of NPF and RSES objectives and the significant work undertaken within each Local Authority to progress Project Ireland 2040. There is now significant alignment between national, regional, and local policy.
- There is serious concern at the trajectory of continued population growth to the Dublin Region which undermines the NPF & RSES policy. Based on findings in the NDP Review, it is unclear if the Project Ireland 2040 process will deliver the wider structural changes required to address the overall 50:50% split fundamental to Project Ireland 2040 and RSES or commit to the services/infrastructure required to achieve the population targets for the Region fundamental to the overall delivery of Project Ireland 2040 and RSES Objectives for regional growth.
- Preliminary census results are also concerning and indicate that while all local authorities in the Region experienced growth it was much less than Dublin and adjoining counties

which have experienced significant growth and there is no indication of a change in the trajectory of population growth to the Dublin area.

The RSES has 301 objectives: 229 Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) together with specific objectives for the MASPs: 22 for Cork, 23 for Limerick-Shannon and 27 for Waterford. These objectives have differing targets and involve specific actions to be taken by stakeholders - Regional, Instructive and Supportive.

The objectives address three over-arching pillars which correspond to the 11 Strategy Statements in the RSES:

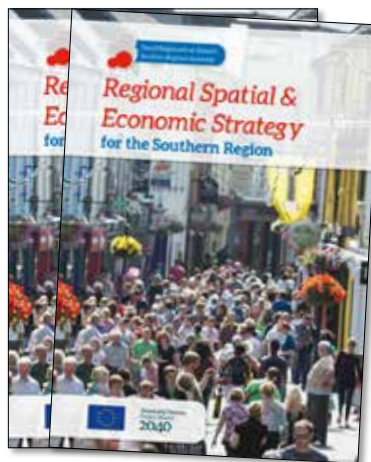
- A Green Region
- A Liveable Region
- A Creative and Innovative Region



Activities, Progress and Milestones in 2022

The priority for 2022 was the continued achievement of RPO 226:

Within a year of the making of the RSES the Southern Regional Assembly will establish robust implementation mechanisms, plans, and structures, including cross sectoral stakeholder and cross boundary local authority steering group committees, to ensure the delivery of the RSES and the MASPs is specific measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound. The implementation phase will include action plans that include time bound targets, progress indicators and a set project tracking plan to ensure effective and efficient delivery.



This objective was progressed through the 32 Implementation Actions as follows:

Task No. 1:	Agree with Assembly proposed Implementation Structures and Establish RSES Delivery Board:
Progress	Agree with Assembly proposed Implementation Structures: Progress Reports to the Assembly members every six months since the adoption of the Implementation Plan.
Task No. 2:	Establish MASP Implementation Structures – Southern Regional Assembly Transformative Initiative:
Progress	Significant preparatory work has been undertaken including investigation of options, the development of a discussion paper, the development of formal proposals and consultation with relevant local authorities, DHLGH and other stakeholders. For the Waterford MASP the preparation of ‘Building a Unified Voice,’ a joint proposal by the Southern Regional Assembly, Waterford City and County Council and Kilkenny County Council and presented to DHLGH.
Task No. 3:	Establish and Agree Regional Indicators & Monitoring - Transformative RSES Initiative:
Progress	In November 2022, the Regional Development Monitor was launched by the three assemblies.
Task No. 4:	Scope Collaboration between Metropolitan Areas – Cork, Limerick – Shannon, Waterford, and Galway:
Progress	The Southern Regional Assembly is undertaking a range of activities to encourage, support and build a collaborative approach between Metropolitan Areas.
Task No. 5-15	Ensure the RSES Programme for Change is Incorporated in Development Plan Process:
Progress	The Southern Regional Assembly Submission Process was completed for 8 Local Authorities in 2022.
Task No. 16 & 17:	Prepare Learning Region Action Plan. Establish Waterford as a UNESCO Learning City. Transformative Southern Regional Assembly Initiative:
Progress	The Southern Regional Assembly developed the ‘Towards a Learning Region’ and the proposal has received Departmental support and was launched in September 2022.
Task No. 18:	Promotion of RSES/Region:
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video content for webinars and virtual events. • User friendly touch bases have been created on our website to map the progress of RSES implementation. • Publication of MASPS. • A new sub section has been added to the Southern Regional Assembly Website containing Government Submissions from the Assembly.

Task No. 19, 20 & 21:	Development of a framework/toolkit to support a regional approach for Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) in the Southern Region. Smart Region definition and framework to facilitate Smart. Cities Driving a Smart Region. Transformative Southern Regional Assembly Initiative:
Progress	<p>Regional Approach to Smart Specialization (S3) The Southern Regional Assembly worked with Bable Consultancy on the development of a framework/toolkit to support a regional approach for Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) in the Southern Region. The Southern Regional Assembly are represented on the Oversight Group for the National S3 Strategy and are working with DETE to develop a Governance Structure to ensure a regional approach to S3 is implemented.</p> <p>Towards a Smart Southern Region The Southern Regional Assembly worked with Maynooth University in 2022 to finalise a definition for a Smart Southern Region. This included developing maturity framework and recommended actions to facilitate Smart Cities Driving a Smart Region through a consultative process. This resulted in the publication of three reports.</p>
Tasks No. 22, 23 & 24	Establish Scope and Remit of Regional Freight Strategy, Ports and Harbour Strategy Regional Airport Strategy
Progress	<p>Project Charters for each have led to a series of consultations with the Department of Transport (DoT) for guidance on the aims and objectives and they have confirmed their support for the advancement of these strategies.</p> <p>In December 2022, the Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2023-2030 was published by the DoT. Following observations and recommendations from the Southern Regional Assembly in the preparation of the final strategy, Action 24 is included which states the Regional Assemblies, with the NTA, shall lead the development of Regional-Level Freight Strategies in consultation with key stakeholders, consistent with the objectives of the RSEs.</p>
Task No. 25:	Developing Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for Placemaking. Transformative Southern Regional Assembly Initiative:
Progress	The Framework provides a resource for stakeholders working in the region to guide the implementation of BGI and NbS. The Framework Toolkit was launched in 2022 and BGI network of local authorities established.
Task No. 26 & 27	Scope remit of Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (inclusive of the bioeconomy). Scope the role, remit, and lead to develop a Regional Decarbonisation Plan:
Progress	Draft Project Charters have been prepared; these tasks are under review in the context of the recently published Climate Action Plan which gives responsibility to the Regional Assemblies for the preparation of a roadmap for Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy.
Task No. 28:	Co-ordination of Climate Action with Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO):
Progress	This is ongoing.
Task No. 29:	Identify the scope and role of the Regional Landscape Strategy for the Region:
Progress	This task is currently under review given resource constraints, the changed emphasis in terms of the Climate Action Plan and the need for clarity on the Landscape Strategy at national level.
Task No. 30:	Regional Sustainable Mobility and 10 Minute Cities & Towns - Transformative Southern Regional Assembly Initiative:
Progress	<p>The Southern Regional Assembly hosted a Regional Sustainable Mobility Webinar for Local Authorities and Transport Stakeholders in the Southern Region in January 2022.</p> <p>The Southern Regional Assembly are a stakeholder partner on the SMP Leadership Forum and Delivery Task Force to advance SMP Actions.</p> <p>In October 2022, the DoT approved the initiative of the Southern Regional Assembly as Pathfinder 30: A training, education, and capacity building workshop programme to support Local Authorities and Stakeholders in each of the three Regions to design and implement smart and sustainable mobility projects under the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) Action Plan 2022-2025.</p> <p>In December 2022, the Southern Regional Assembly as the managing authority for Pathfinder 30, published a Request for Tender for specialist services to design and deliver the programme in coordination with the DoT three Regional Assemblies.</p>
Task No. 31:	Support the development of the Eastern Corridor:
Progress	Recommendation for inclusion of Eastern Corridor included in submission on Draft Wexford Plan.

Task No. 32:**Improve Capacity Building through developing bidding capacity:****Progress**

This initiative is ongoing through submissions to Development Plan, development of workshops, engagement with Local Authorities and, ETC Network however it has not progressed as initially intended as a formal programme.

Engagement with Government Departments/Others

Submissions were made by the Southern Regional Assembly in 2022:

Irish Water: Regional Water Resource Plan Eastern and Midland Region 21st March 2022

Irish Water: Regional Water Resource Plan South-West Region 24th August 2022

Port of Cork Masterplan 28th October 2022

Department of Transport: Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031 (Final Draft) 30th November 2022

NTA - WMATS: Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy

ARUP & Dept of Transport: Strategic Rail Review

Department of Transport: Irish Road Haulage Strategy

Representation of the regional view and engagement in ongoing relevant EU, national and regional policy implementation processes/fora including:

Project Ireland 2040 Board

National Climate Change Adaptation Forum

National Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum

Irish Water National Water Resource Plan and Regional Water Resource Plans

Regional Enterprise Plans; Steering Group participation for SW, MW, SE Regional Enterprise Plans

Regional Skills Forum (SW, MW, SE)

Midlands Regional Transition Team (MRTT)

Town Centre First

Steering group- Coastal Change Management Strategy

LECP Advisory Group

Planning for Climate Change Steering Group

Atlantic Economic Corridor

Consultation and coordination with DoT, TII and NTA for the implementation of the RSES Transport Strategy including preparation and implementation of Metropolitan Transport Strategies (CMATS, LSMATS and WMATS) and Local Transport Plans

All Island Strategic Rail Review -Department of Transport

National Rail Freight Strategy review with Iarnród Éireann

National Marine Planning Framework –consultation with DHLGH Marine Planning Policy Division

Engagement, research, and training through OPR Forum:

- Academic research with UCD (under the Irish Research Council Enterprise Partnership Scheme) on Achieving Regional Equality – Urban Rural Dynamics in Irelands Southern Region EU-Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Policy
- International Transport Forum (ITF)

Irish Planning Institute (IPI) Marine Planning Committee.

ERDF Regional Programmes

The Southern Regional Assembly is the Managing Authority for the Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27 and the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20. The Regional Programmes aim to strengthen EU economic, social, and territorial cohesion by correcting imbalances between regions and are co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021-27

In 2022, the Southern Regional Assembly continued development work on the new ERDF co-funded Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme for the 2021-27 period with a new programme area encompassing two Irish regions - the Southern Region and the Eastern and Midland Region.

The Assembly worked closely with the European Commission, Member State, government departments, social and business partners, state agencies and local authorities to develop investment supports that meet the objectives and requirements of the ERDF while being clearly targeted at identified needs for the two regions of the programme area.

With the support of Member State, the Assembly secured additional funding in 2022 and a commitment to ongoing funding under technical assistance to recruit new staff members to the Regional Programme delivery team. This helped to accelerate the work programme, culminating in the formal approval of the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 2021 - 2027 by the European Commission in November 2022.

The new Regional Programme is a €663 million package of ERDF and national funding for the Southern Region and the Eastern & Midland Region. It supports balanced regional growth within and between the two regions under three priorities - Smarter and More Competitive Regions, Low Carbon, and Energy Efficient Regions, and Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development.



1. Developing Smarter More Competitive Regions: building RD&I capacity in the public research institutions in our regions, accelerating the translation of cutting-edge research into commercial applications at a regional level, supporting innovation diffusion and strengthening regional innovation ecosystems in line with Ireland's Smart Specialisation Strategy and the Regional Enterprise Plans. Funding will be targeted at universities and enterprise clusters in the programme area. Funding calls will be managed by the Higher Education Authority, Science Foundation Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland.

2. Creating Greener, More Energy Efficient Regions and a Just Transition: scaling up investment in actions that improve the energy efficiency of residential homes, while targeting homeowners in, or at risk of, energy poverty. Funding will be provided through SEAI to support a fully funded energy upgrade service to qualifying homeowners.

3. Supporting Sustainable Urban Development in our Regions: an integrated strategic approach to the regeneration of key towns using a Town Centres First Framework. Funding calls will be managed by the Southern Regional Assembly and will support local authorities responsible for implementing the Town Centres First policy in selected key towns in the programme area.

■ Mallow Board Walk: Funded by the 2014 - 2020 S& E Regional Programme.



The Programme supports balanced regional development by co-funding investment under EU policy objectives of a more competitive and smarter Europe, a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe, and a Europe closer to citizens by fostering sustainable and integrated development.

Southern and Eastern Regional Programme 2014-20

The Southern & Eastern (S&E) Regional Programme 2014-20 is a €620 million package, co-financed by the ERDF and national funding which supports activities in the S&E region of Ireland. The Programme co-finances activities under six priority areas, including most recently a priority dedicated to the public health emergency due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Vincent Dunphy, David Kelly, Cllr Pip Breen, Enda Hogan and Karen Coughlan celebrate formal approval by the European Commission of the Regional Programme at Government Buildings, November 2022.



Programme Priorities:

- Strengthening Research, Technology, Development & Innovation
- SME Competitiveness
- Low Carbon Economy
- Coronavirus Reponse
- Sustainable Urban Development
- Technical Assistance (programme management supports)

The programme is coming to an end soon with 100% of funding allocated and over 97% of ERDF declared to the Commission by the end of 2022. The focus in 2022 was on working closely with local authorities to finish out their projects that were awarded funding under the Designated Urban Centres Grant Scheme and in preparing the groundwork for programme closure in 2024.

Programme Communications 2022

Information and Communications activities are delivered against the multi-annual communications strategy, which was adopted by the Monitoring Committee and complies with EU regulations and national eligibility guidelines.

Information & Communications Compliance Supports

The Managing Authority (MA) publishes a searchable and downloadable list of the operations funded by the Programme on the Assembly website. The list was updated twice in 2022. Work also continued in 2022 to support Programme beneficiaries to comply with communications requirements under the EU Regulations national guidelines.



■ Cathaoirleach Cllr Oliver Walsh & Vincent Dunphy at the Dún Laoghaire-Baths.

National European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) & INFORM Communicators Networks

The MA continued to collaborate with other EU funds in Ireland, through the national ESIF network which consists of representatives from both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The MA also participates in the European Commission's INFORM network to communicate with, and learn from, other programmes across the regions of Europe - in particular, activities supporting the Europe-wide #euinmyregion campaign.

Regional Programme in the Media

The MA issued regular press releases and advertorials in local, regional, and national print media and on local radio in 2022 to highlight the work of the Programme, including, connecting the programme with other EU projects and programmes, as well as local, regional, and national policies. Key events included activity around International Women's Day in March, Europe Day in May, the EU Commissioner's Visit to Waterford in September, the launch of the report to develop a UNESCO Learning Region in October and the approval of the Southern, Eastern and Midlands Regional Programme 2021-2027 in November. Other media activity included joint pieces with other EU funds and launches of projects which were co-funded under the ERDF 2014-2020 programme in national and sectoral publications.

Europe Day 2022

The MA collaborated with other EU funds from across the island of Ireland to highlight the benefits of EU funding in communities with a 4-page supplement in the Sunday Independent on Europe Day, 9th May 2022. This activity was bolstered by advertorials in ten local papers and interviews and advertisements in local radio stations across the region.

ERDF Regional Programme at Winterval 2022

The ERDF S&E Regional Programme 2014-2020 supported the Apple Market regeneration in 2014 and at Waterford's Winterval Christmas Festival 2022, the MA sponsored a Magic Mirrors walk through Europe to reflect on this key support of Waterford City through EU funding and transport passers-by through iconic European cityscapes.



■ Frank Curran, Siobhan Rudden, Cllr Mary Hanafin and Cathaoirleach Cllr Oliver Walsh at Dún Laoghaire-Baths.

The Graduate Quiz

The MA sponsored the 2021/2022 Graduate.ie weekly online citizenship and democracy programme for post primary students, an initiative which aims to engage and inspire young people in a fun way to learn about important local, national, and European topics, by taking part in an online quiz to win educational trips.

This sponsorship aims to highlight the activities and projects co-financed by the S&E Regional Programme among younger generations. The total number of students that registered to take part was 9,107 and of these, there was an average of 4,750 taking part on a weekly basis. Over 8,000 students took part in the competition and 24 were selected as winners. Two winners were sponsored by the MA, Transition Year students from Kilkenny and Wexford, with six winners overall from the Southern Region. All winners will travel to the European Parliament in April and May 2023.



■ SRA, NWRA and EMRA staff at the National Ploughing Championship in September 2022.

Ploughing Championships 2022

The MA returned to the National Ploughing Championships in September 2022 to tell the good news stories of the EU funded projects in the regions as part of the #euinmyregion campaign. The biggest outdoor event in Europe, the National Ploughing Championship hosted 277,000 visitors and with over 1,700 exhibitors over three days and was very effective way to tell the stories of #euinmyregion to directly to European citizens.

Kindly hosted by the European Commission Representation Office in Ireland, the Assembly joined forces with a wide array of EU colleagues to promote the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme, along with the BMW, ERDF, ESF and EMFF programmes amongst other EU initiatives. It was a great opportunity to visit beneficiaries of the S&E Regional Programme who were also exhibiting, such as regional research centres and the Local Enterprise Offices.

European Territorial Cooperation Programmes

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is a key goal of EU Cohesion Policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional, and local actors from different Member States.

ETC, which is supported by the ERDF, consists of a variety of Interreg programmes, URBACT and ESPON. Within Interreg, there are three cooperation streams:

Cross border: Interreg A	Transnational: Interreg B	Interregional
Ireland Wales Programme	Interreg North-West Europe Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic Interreg Atlantic Area	Interreg Europe

The Southern Regional Assembly is actively involved in the monitoring and delivery of ETC programmes in Ireland.

Programme	Southern Regional Assembly Role
Ireland Wales Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Partner with Department of Public Expenditure & Reform and Welsh Government • Contact Point in Ireland • Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners
Interreg North-West Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member State Representative on the Programme Monitoring Committee • Contact Point in Ireland • Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners
Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
Interreg Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Point in the Southern & Eastern region. • Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
URBACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated First Level Control Audit for Irish partners in the Southern & Eastern region
ESPON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative on the Programme Monitoring Committee
Interreg Atlantic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative on the Programme's Regional Advisory Group

First Level Control Audit

First Level Control (FLC) involves checks or audits of project expenditure during project implementation before a payment claim is submitted. The Assembly's FLC team validates expenditure claims for five ETC programmes - Ireland Wales, Interreg North-West Europe, Interreg Northern Periphery & Arctic, Interreg Europe and URBACT.

The FLC team verifies and validates expenditure incurred by a project to ensure compliance with the relevant EU, national, regional, institutional and programme rules as well as with the provisions of the subsidy contract and the approved application form. These controls provide a guarantee for the Managing Authority, the Certifying Authority and, most importantly, for the project itself, that costs co-financed under ETC funded Programmes are accounted for and eligible.

FLC covers 100% of all declared project spend. The FLC system consists of two types of verifications checks:

1. Desk based administrative checks on expenditure declared in payment claims,
2. On-the spot checks that take place at the project partner's office and carried out on a sample basis.

Activity Update 2022

During 2022, the Assembly's FLC team audited and validated 156 project claims worth €11,538,160.51 to Irish organisations participating as project partners on the 5 European Territorial Cooperation programmes.

Unit Highlights:

The staff of the FLC Unit attended an online webinar for First Level Controllers organised by the NWE Secretariat on 19th July to discuss the current FLC system, on-the spot-checks, procurement, JS feedback on FLC Checklists and second level audits. Also discussed was the future FLC system which will include a sampling methodology and simplified cost options for the new 21-27 programming period.

Following the lifting of Covid restrictions, Controllers in the unit were back out on the road from May conducting on-the spot-checks in person at partner premises. In all, 18 projects were spot-checked on-site during 2022.

During 2022, the new online resource on FLC was updated on the Assembly's website with information on audit and programme-specific guidance for project partners, including programme guides to the new programme period 2021 - 2027. The link to the new section on the website is below.

For further information on First Level Control:

flc@southernassembly.ie

Website: www.southernassembly.ie/first-level-control

 The Apple Market, Waterford City & County Council.



Interreg VA: Cross-border Cooperation

Ireland-Wales Programme



The Ireland-Wales Programme supports activities that facilitate cross-border co-operation between organisations in Ireland and Wales.

A maritime programme, it connects organisations, businesses, and communities on the west coast of Wales with the eastern and southern coasts of Ireland. The current programme has an overall grant budget of €100m from the ERDF and a co-financing rate of 80%. The Welsh Government manages the programme with partners, the Southern Regional Assembly and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Irish Development Officers are based at the Southern Regional Assembly, which is the designated First Level Control for payment claims from Irish partners.

The Programme has three priorities under which projects operate:

1. Cross-border Innovation
2. Adaptation of the Irish Sea & Coastal Communities to Climate Change
3. Cultural & Natural Resources & Heritage

For information about the Programme:

Samantha Richardson, Development Officer:
 srichardson@southernassembly.ie
 Breda Curran, Development Officer:
 bcurran@southernassembly.ie

2022 Highlights:

Dŵr Uisce:

On the 5th of May 2022, Dr Roberta Bellini from the Dŵr Uisce project visited Ballinabranna National School in Milford, Co. Carlow as part of their outreach programme. The Dŵr Uisce team actively engaged in sharing the knowledge generated by the project to raise awareness of the climate action potential

of water-energy efficiency and to disseminate their research outputs. Water-energy science communication, outreach and engagement are at the core of Dŵr Uisce's principle.



Dr Roberta Bellini (on right) from Dŵr Uisce with a teacher and pupils of Ballinabranna NS in Carlow at one of Dŵr Uisce outreach events on the 29th of April 2022.

STREAM:

John Ronan and Hugh O'Sullivan from the STREAM team in SETU and Captain Shane Begley, Head of the BIM National Fishery training Centre, installed a weather station on the roof of the BIM National Fishery Training Centre, in Castletownbere, Co Cork on the 2nd of February 2022.

The weather station, one of five installed around the Southern and South-eastern coasts by the project, is generating live data which can be accessed on the STREAM portal <https://grafana.marinestream.eu/d/9PAgN6R7z/weather-stations?orgId=2&var-Location=Castletownbere>.

The information will be of great benefit to those involved in aquaculture, inshore fisheries, and environmental studies e.g., the EPA & the Marine Institute.



John Ronan and Hugh O'Sullivan from the STREAM team in SETU and Captain Shane Begley.

Projects

Project	Partners	Website	ERDF Funding
Brainwaves	UCC & Aberystwyth University.	www.ucc.ie/en/brainwaves	€1.16m
CATALYST	UWTSD, SETU, WRAP Cymru, Tipperary Co. Co. & Carlow Co. Co.	www.catalystproject.eu	€1.35m
More than a Club	FAI & Vi-Ability.	ww.morethanaclub.ie	€1.02m
Bucanier	Pembrokeshire Co. Co., Carmarthenshire Co. Co., Wexford Co. Co., Swansea University, SETU & Bord Iascaigh Mhara.	www.bucanier.eu/home	€2.35m
ISPP	Bangor University & Bord Iascaigh Mhara.	www.ispp.bangor.ac.uk	€1.1m
Pisces	SETU, Cardiff University, MHPA & Bord Iascaigh Mhara.	www.pisces.tssg.org	€1.8m
CAILIN	Swansea University, Bangor University, Cardiff University, UCD, Tyndall National Institute & NUIG.	www.calin.wales/en	€14.72m
Dŵr Uisce	Trinity College Dublin & Bangor University.	www.dwr-uisce.eu	€4.47m
Healthy Oats	UCD, Teagasc, Aberystwyth University & Swansea University.	www.healthyoatsirelandwales.com	€2.18m
Selkie	UCC, DP Energy Ire. Ltd., Gavin & Doherty Geosolutions, Swansea University, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum & Menter Môn.	www.selkieproject.eu	€4.2m
Acclimatize	UCD & Aberystwyth University.	www.acclimatize.eu	€7.4m
CHERISH	RCHAW, Aberystwyth University, GSi & Discovery Programme Ireland.	www.rcahmw.gov.uk	€4.9m
CCAT	UCD, UCD, Fingal Co. Co., Cardiff University, Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum & the Port of Milford Haven.	www.ccatproject.eu	€1.3m
Bluefish	Bangor University, Swansea University, Aberystwyth University, UCC, Marine Institute & Bord Iascaigh Mhara.	www.bluefishproject.com	€5.3m
ECHOES	Aberystwyth University, UCC, Compass Informatics, British Trust for Ornithology and Geo Smart.	www.echoesproj.eu	€2.6m
STREAM	SETU, Swansea University & MTU.	www.marinestream.eu	€4.3m
ECOstructure	Aberystwyth University, Swansea University, Bangor University, UCC & UCD.	www.ecostructureproject.eu	€4.88m
Rediscovering Ancient Connections - The Saints	Wexford Co. Co., Visit Wexford, Pembrokeshire Co. Co. & Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.	www.ancientconnections.net	€3.08m
Celtic Route	Carmarthenshire Co. Co., Waterford Co. Co., Wexford Co. Co., Wicklow Co. Co., Ceredigion Co. Co., & Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority.	www.celticroutes.info	€1.59m
CUPHAT	Aberystwyth University, Dyfed Archaeological Trust & UCD.	www.cuphat.aber.ac.uk	€2.4m
LIVE	UCC, Bangor University, Gywnedd Co, South Kerry Development Partnership, Kerry Co. Co., & National Trust.	www.ecomuseumlive.eu	€2.66m
Portalis	SETU, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, Ceredigion County Council & Waterford Chamber of Commerce.	www.portalisproject.eu	€1.56m
Ports, Past & Present	UCC, Wexford County Council, Aberystwyth University, & University of Wales Trinity St David.	www.portspastpresent.eu	€2.6m

LIVE:

In a sheltered cove in County Kerry, ancient tree stumps are revealed at low tide. Carbon dating by the LIVE Project reveals they were alive around 4,000 years ago. Aoibheann Lambe and Calum Sweeney from the LIVE team at UCC led a workshop to the site in Bunaneer, Castlecove on 16th August 2022. The LIVE project is trialling the Ecomuseum model with communities on the Iveragh (Ireland) and Llŷn (Wales) peninsulas to enable coastal communities to promote their natural and cultural assets, creating opportunities for sustainable tourism, especially outside of the traditional peak tourist seasons. Information and resources available on the LIVE website: www.ecomuseumlive.eu



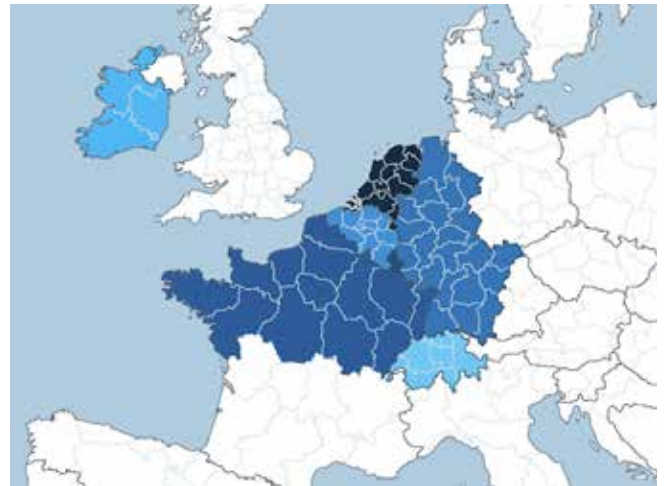
LIVE staff Aoibheann Lambe and Calum Sweeney (UCC) lead an Iveragh Ecomuseum workshop at Bunaneer, Castlecove, County Kerry as part of Heritage Week on 16th August 2022. In this sheltered cove, ancient tree stumps are revealed at low tide. LIVE has carbon dated some of these revealing they were alive around 4,000 years ago.

Interreg VB: Transnational Cooperation



Interreg North-West Europe

The Interreg North-West Europe (NWE) Programme fosters transnational cooperation to make North-West Europe a key economic player and an attractive place to work and live, with high levels of innovation, sustainability, and cohesion.



Interreg NWE supports cooperation across borders in seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, and Switzerland). Projects must involve partners from at least 3 different countries and apply a joint approach to tackle common issues. The aim is to reduce the disparities among regions and raise the overall level of performance across the whole area.



Throughout 2022, projects from the 2014-2020 funding period finalised their activities and prepared for closing. Over the seven-year period, 102 projects were funded worth a total amount of €376 million, of which 60% was EU funded, including 44 projects funded under the Innovation theme; 35 projects under Low carbon; and 23 projects under Resource and materials efficiency. Projects that had innovative approaches to ensuring the long-term effects of their work were also invited to apply for “capitalisation” funding in 2020 and 2021.

Thematic focus 2021- 2027

The Interreg North-West Europe IP document, available online, outlines the five priorities for the future NWE Programme to focus on: Climate and Environment, Energy Transition, Circular Economy, Innovation and Resilience, and Inclusive Society. Within each priority area there are specific objectives that will contribute to achieving those priorities. The specific objectives are:

- Nature protection and biodiversity
- Climate adaptation and disaster risk prevention
- Energy efficiency
- Renewable energy
- Circular and resource efficient economy
- Innovation capacities and the uptake of technologies
- Access to employment
- Access to healthcare
- Culture and sustainable tourism



First calls for the programme period 2021-27

The Interreg North-West Europe Programme 2021-2027 was formally approved by the European Commission in 2022. The first call for proposals was launched in March, and with a Step 1 deadline on 15th June 2022. Over 40% of Step 1 proposals were selected to proceed to Step 2, and consortia had until 15th December to prepare and submit their final project idea. More than 30 proposals were successfully submitted in December, of which 75% included Irish partner organisations. The outcome of the first call for proposals will be available in March 2023. The second call for proposals was launched on 14th November 2022, with the deadline for Step 1 in February 2023. Information on the calendar for calls for proposals is regularly updated and available on the Interreg North-West Europe website.

SPOTLIGHT: HeatNet NWE Project

HeatNet NWE addresses the challenge of reducing CO2 emissions in North- West Europe by creating an integrated transnational NWE approach to the supply of renewable and low carbon heat, including waste heat to residential and commercial buildings.

The project had a total budget of €11.57 million, of which €6.94 million is EU funding.

The project, led by Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency, has developed and tested six local district heating and cooling networks (DHC) in UK, Ireland, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands.

The project has successfully delivered:

1. A transferrable HeatNet model for the implementation of four District Heating and Cooling schemes in NWE.
2. Six living labs developed, tested, and demonstrated the HeatNet model to make it robust.
3. Transition Roadmaps were planned for roll out of new technical, institutional, and organizational arrangements in six living labs (new roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, regulation and policies, spatial planning, business models & viability, connection to finance and markets, acceptance, etc).
4. The HeatNet model was promoted and fostered across the countries of North-West Europe through Transition Roadmaps to secure wide and long-term impact of HeatNet. The consortium combined emerging knowhow on District Heating and Cooling with the capacity in the long term to reduce institutional and organizational barriers and to deliver permanent infrastructure at local and regional level. The multiple partners involved worked to jointly develop and promote the HeatNet-model and assist the six successful living labs at the investment sites.



The HeatNet programme featured on the "10 things to know about" programme which aired on RTÉ One, on Monday 12th December 2022. The episode focused on research developments that will help decarbonise Irish heating systems.

Further Information on Interreg NWE in Ireland

Sarah Davoren, National Contact Point:
sdavoren@southernassembly.ie

First Level Control:
flc@southernassembly.ie

Website: www.nweurope.eu



Interreg Atlantic Area



Atlantic Area promotes transnational cooperation between 36 Atlantic regions of five European countries: Ireland, western UK, Portugal and designated coastal regions of Spain and France. With a total budget of €185m, the Programme’s overall objective is to implement solutions to answer regional challenges in the fields of innovation, resource efficiency, environment, and protection of cultural assets, to generate a better quality of life in the Atlantic Area territory.

The Programme has four priorities under which projects operate:

1. Stimulating innovation & competitiveness
2. Fostering resource efficiency
3. Strengthening the territory’s resilience to risks of natural, climate & human origin
4. Enhancing biodiversity & the natural and cultural assets

The Southern Regional Assembly sits on the Programme’s Regional Advisory Group.

€8.35 million (ERDF) was allocated to 23 projects under the 2014-20 Programme during 2022.

In 2022 there was two Programme Monitoring Committee Meetings held for the 2014-2020 programme.

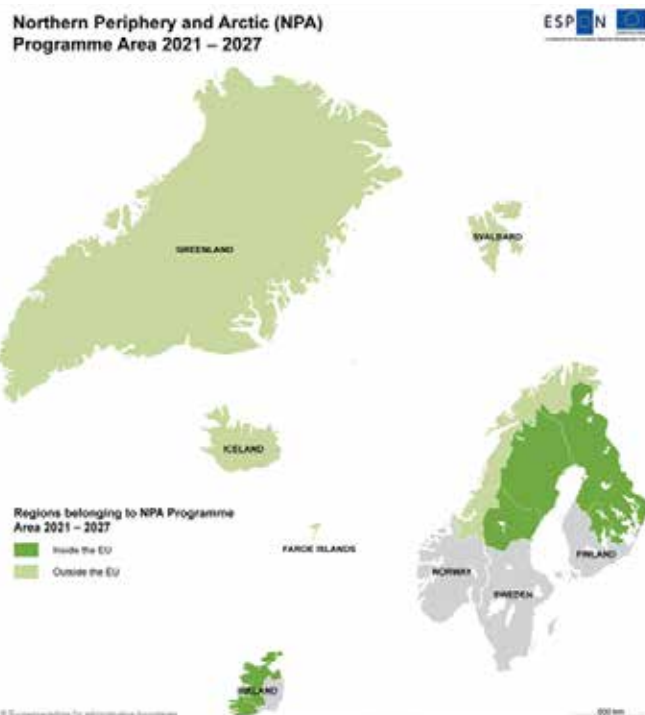
A task force is preparing the new 2021-27 programme, with representatives of programme Member States (Portugal, Spain, Ireland, France), Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, and the European Commission. In 2022 there was one Programme Monitoring Committee Meeting for the 2021-2027 meeting.

For further information
 National Contact Point:
 info@nwra.ie
Website: www.atlanticarea.eu



Northern Periphery and Arctic

Northern Periphery & Arctic



The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme involves cooperation between nine countries which share several joint challenges and opportunities that can best be overcome and realised by transnational cooperation. The Programme aims to help generate vibrant, competitive, and sustainable communities by harnessing innovation, expanding the capacity for entrepreneurship, and seizing the unique growth initiatives and opportunities of the Northern and Arctic regions in a resource efficient way.

The 2014-2020 Programme has four Priorities under which projects operate

1. Innovation
2. Entrepreneurship
3. Renewables & Energy Efficiency
4. Protecting, developing & promoting natural & cultural heritage

The Southern Regional Assembly sits on the Programme’s Regional Advisory Group and is the designated First Level Control for all payment claims from partners located in the S&E regions.

In 2022, seven main projects and ten Preparatory projects were approved with funding amounting to €4,535,668.42 (ERDF) under 2021- 2027 Programme.

In 2022, there was one Programme Monitoring Committee meeting held for both the 2014-2020 programme and for the 2021-2027 programme. One Regional Appraisal Group meeting was organised in 2022. The NWRA invited the Northern Periphery and Arctic Monitoring Committee to host a meeting in Monaghan on the 28th of September 2022.

For further information

National Contact Point:

info@nwra.ie

First Level Control: flc@southernassembly.ie / info@nwra.ie

Website: www.interreg-npa.eu

Interreg VC: Interregional Cooperation



Interreg Europe

Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy.

By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, the Programme aims to ensure that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place. The Programme co-finances projects which allow regional and local public authorities and other players of regional relevance across Europe to exchange practices and ideas on the way public policies work and thereby find solutions to improve their strategies for their own citizens. In addition to regular projects, policy-learning platforms are also co-funded.

The Programme has four Priorities under which projects operate:

1. Research & Innovation
2. SME Competitiveness
3. Low Carbon Economy
4. Environment & Resource Efficiency



The Southern Regional Assembly is a Contact Point for the S&E regions and represents the Irish Member State on the Programme's Monitoring Committee. The Assembly is the designated FLC for all payment claims submitted by partners located in the S&E regions.

2021-2027 Programme Update

To prepare for the 2021-27 programming period, a programming committee was set up to formally drive the process for taking formal decisions on the shape and format of the new Interreg Europe. The committee comprises delegates from 29 partner states with an observer from the European Commission, the Programme's Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat. The final draft programme was formally adopted by the EU Commission in July 2022.

The first call for proposals was launched on 5th April and closed on 31st May 2022. 134 applications were submitted with the involvement of 780 organisations from all Partner States and 72 approved. Irish involvement is very high with 36 organisations involved in 27 projects.

Regional Contact Point for Southern & Eastern regions:

David Kelly, dkelly@southernassembly.ie

First Level Control: flc@southernassembly.ie / info@nwra.ie

Website: www.interregeurope.eu



URBACT III

URBACT III aims to enable cities to work together to develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another's experiences, drawing lessons, and identifying good practices to improve urban policies across the 27 Member States, Norway, and Switzerland.

The programme had a total eligible budget of €96.3m and is financed through the ERDF. URBACT III has four main objectives:

1. Capacity for Policy Delivery
2. Policy Design
3. Policy Implementation
4. Building and Sharing Knowledge

The Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly is the National Contact Point for URBACT III. The Southern Regional Assembly is the designated FLC for partners in the S&E region.

In 2022, there were two PMC meetings held: one online in May and one in Brno, Czechia at the end of November. Also, in 2022 two network final events were held in Ireland. Ru:rbán - "A Guide for Design & Implementation of Community Gardens & Allotments for County Carlow" was held in Carlow Town on October the 27th. On 15th of November, The National Practice Transfer Initiative (NPTI) on Playful Paradigm-Playful Towns was held in Sligo Town.

URBACT IV

URBACT IV has kicked off with a budget for period between 2021-27 amounting to €79,769,000 alongside the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance with a budget of €5,000,000.

For further information

National Contact Point:

urbactireland@emra.ie

First Level Control:

flc@southernassembly.ie

Website: www.urbact.eu <https://urbact.eu/ireland>



ESPON 2030

The new ESPON 2030 programme, running for the period 2021-2027 bridges research with policies by providing territorial analyses, data, and maps to:

- Support EU development policies – and particularly Cohesion Policy – with facts and evidence.
- Help public authorities to benchmark their region or city, identify new challenges and potentials and shape successful development policies for the future.

All 27 EU member states and four partner states (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) participate in the ESPON programme and contribute to its co-finance.

As with every EU funded programme, ESPON is managed by a Managing Authority, which is the Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning of Luxembourg.

The programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation), which is a structure, jointly created by Luxembourg together with the three Belgian regions of Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels Capital.

The total budget of ESPON for the programming period 2021-2027 is €60m, whereof the EU contribution is 80% (€48m) and the contribution of the 27 member states is 20% (€12m). In addition, the ESPON 2030 Programme receives support of €1.685m from the four Partner States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland). ESPON creates evidence and knowledge. ESPON develop studies based on the needs of European public authorities at all levels. Any local, regional, or national authority as well as an EU institution can inform us about policy support needs and can become an ESPON stakeholder.

Our studies have a territorial focus, which means that our analyses are adjusted to the specificity and needs of the people and the places we are looking at.

For the ESPON 2030 Programme, our studies and events are clustered within the so-called Thematic Action Plans (TAPs).

The results of these studies are then used in different ways:

- Directly feed policy debates at the EU, national, regional, and local level,
- Make the key EU policies, such as the Cohesion Policy, more effective, and boost the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2030,
- Support the priorities of EU presidencies with tailor-made research,
- Inspire policy dialogues at early stages and trigger policy transformation,
- Help citizens/policymakers to understand how their place (city/regions/area) performs in comparison to other European places, and
- Provide fresh information and analyses on the topics that are high on the European agenda.

The National Institute for Regional & Spatial Analysis at Maynooth University is the Contact Point for the ESPON 2020. The Southern Regional Assembly sits on the Programme Monitoring Committee.

For further information:

Caroline Creamer is the Contact Point:

Email: caroline.creamer@nuim.ie

Website: www.espon.eu

EU Projects



MATCH-UP focuses on the optimisation of the places where people change between transport modes. MATCH-UP aims to achieve improvements in the interchange between four main types of low-carbon means of transport (walking/cycling, rail transport, public transport and green vehicles).

The partnership consists of four European regions (Southern & Eastern Ireland, County of Northeim, Germany, Municipality of Funchal, Portugal and Timisoara Municipality, Romania) working together to share experience, solutions, and good practice to develop and deliver better public policy to reduce carbon emissions and support low carbon urban mobility in designated urban centres.

2022 Highlights:

Regional Sustainability Transport Webinar 2022

In January 2022, The Southern Regional Assembly hosted a Webinar which included Minister Eamonn Ryan as Keynote Speaker with presenters from the Department of Transport, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the National Transport Authority. This was the first time all the Departments got together to discuss Sustainable Transport. It was the first joint Sustainable Mobility conference which launched a number of national policies for more sustainable and active travel in Ireland and included the 10 minute City and town concept, as set out in the RSES. As a result of that event, an Advisory Group was set up to support and advise Local Authorities.

Policy Change Achieved 2022:

National Policy Objective - includes a strategic focus to support 10 minute/15 minute neighborhoods and the Town Centre First approach for the regeneration, repopulation and development of rural towns and villages and uses the MATCH-UP 10 Minute Towns Initiative as an example for Local Authorities.



For further information about MATCH-UP:

Rose Power, Project Officer: rpower@southernassembly.ie
 Website: interregeurope.eu/match-up
 Twitter: @MATCHUP_Project
 Facebook: @MatchUpProject

MATCH-UP was part-funded by Interreg Europe, through the European Regional Development Fund.





EMPOWER focuses on reducing carbon emissions by dynamically monitoring energy efficiency through energy monitoring and exploring innovative methods of financing energy projects, with an overall objective to develop and deliver better public policy in these areas. The partnership consists of nine European regions, who are working together to share experience, solutions to develop and deliver better public policy to reduce carbon emissions in buildings.

2022 Highlights:

In March 2022, 3CEA and the Southern Regional Assembly hosted an Energy Poverty Workshop which invited nine stakeholders to relay their good practices on how Ireland and other European Countries are trying to assist in alleviating energy poverty by looking at alternative ways to heat and cool homes. These nine stakeholders were chosen from over 50 case studies as the most capable of creating real impact on Energy Poverty throughout Europe.

Policy Instrument Improvement: The Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) – Regional Policy Objective (RPO) 90: Regional Decarbonisation will develop a Regional Decarbonisation Plan for the Southern Region.

On 6th August 2022, the Director of the Southern Regional Assembly approved the incorporation of the EMPOWER Energy Poverty Guidebook 2022 and the good practices therein into the Regional Decarbonisation Plan for the Southern Region.

Result of Policy Improvement: Ensuring a fair and just transition by protecting those most effected by energy poverty in the roll out of the Regional Decarbonisation Plan for the Southern Region.

For further information about EMPOWER:

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 Twitter: @interregempower Facebook: @Empower0

EMPOWER was part-funded by Interreg Europe through the European Regional Development Fund.



EMPOWER Energy Poverty Guidebook 2022

The Southern Regional Assembly in conjunction with 3CEA now South East Energy Agency through the Interreg Europe EMPOWER project launched an Energy Poverty Guidebook 2022.

The Guidebook outlines how Energy Poverty is a real cause for concern in Ireland and Europe, how it is impacting households but also what can be done to ease the strain on householders. This also resulted in a Policy Improvement.

EMPOWER Energy Poverty Technical Workshop - March 2022 in Cork, Ireland



The Southern Regional Assembly is the Irish partner on COHES3ION, an interregional project that aims at improving the performance and impact of Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) and linked ERDF Regional Programmes in terms of delivery of innovation by Research & Innovation (R&I) actors. The Assembly is partnered with nine regions in Spain, Italy, Romania, Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Wales, sharing the common challenge of effectively implementing Smart Specialisation at the regional level.

COHES3ION is tackling this by identifying regional Smart Priorities, strengthening the regional coordination of innovation delivery and support players.

2022 Highlights:

The Southern Regional Assembly is now a formal and active member of the S3 Implementation Group (IG). Learnings from the COHES3ION Project informed targeted discussions and Ireland’s S3 will now be monitored and implemented by a multi-level process involving national and regional stakeholders. The Southern Regional Assembly are a key member at each level with a varying level of responsibility.

Smart Southern Region

To advance the RSES Smart Southern Region ambition, the Southern Regional Assembly, in collaboration with Maynooth University, produced three reports informing a ‘Smart Region Framework for the Southern Regional Assembly’.

Report 1 - ‘**Smart Region Consultation**’.

Report 2 - ‘**International Approaches to, and Good Practice in, the development of Smart Regions**’.

Report 3 - ‘**Smart Region Maturity Framework for the Southern Region**’.

Economic Geographers Event in June 2022

The Southern Regional Assembly in collaboration with Carla Maria Kayanan from UCD School of Geography spoke at the Event on Achieving Regional Equality through Ireland’s Smart Southern Region. The presentation emphasised that while the Smart Southern Region recognises the driving role played by cities in the evolution of smart places, it also acknowledges that innovation and ‘smartness’ can also emanate from rural areas and the entrepreneurialism of community. The Smart Southern Region looks to redefine ‘smart’ away from the purely urban focus to encompass a greater diversity of settlement types.



COHES3ION Final Project Event, Bilbao December 2022

The final project conference took place in Bilbao with partners joining to celebrate the achievements of the project. The conference was well attended both in person and online.

For more information about the COHES3ION project:

Karen Coughlan, Project Officer:
kcoughlan@southernassembly.ie
Website: www.interregeurope.eu/cohes3ion/
Twitter: @cohes3ion

COHES3ION is part-funded by Interreg Europe, through the European Regional Development Fund



The Interreg Europe FIRESPOL project looked to boost Renewable Energy investment by supporting the introduction of innovative Financial Instruments in the partner regions. This was achieved through improvements in regional policy instruments, including new schemes and operations under Operational Programmes.

The partnership consists of Managing Authorities and Energy Agencies from six EU regions – Spain, Germany, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, and Ireland – to share knowledge, experience, good practices, ideas, and solutions.

Through its involvement in the FIRESPOL project, the Southern Regional Assembly had the opportunity to identify relevant good practices to inform regional policy, facilitate the introduction of innovative grants or financial instruments, and support greater investment in renewable energy in the region.

Final Event

The FIRESPOL Final Conference took place online on the 15th of March 2022. This conference included project partners and stakeholders disseminating their learnings and the impact the FIRESPOL project had on each project partner region. The Joint Secretariat of INTERREG Europe joined in the conference to speak on the low carbon economy. The Southern Regional Assembly spoke on the Financial Solutions in Renewable Energy Strategy in the Southern Region of Ireland.

For further information about the FIRESPOL project:

Karen Coughlan, Project Officer:
 kcoughlan@southernassembly.ie
 Website: www.interregeurope.eu/firespol
 Twitter: @firespolproject
 Facebook: @firespolproject

FIRESPOL is part-funded by Interreg Europe, through the European Regional Development Fund.



The Southern Regional Assembly is the Irish partner on Blue Green City. The project started in August 2019 and has a total budget of €1.3m between nine European partners. It includes partners from France, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, UK, Italy, and Romania. The Lead Partner is the Metropolis Nice Côte d’Azur, based in Nice, France.



2022 Highlights:

The Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) Framework has been created by ARUP on behalf of the Southern Regional Assembly as part of the Interreg Europe Blue Green Cities Project.

For further information about the Blue Green City:

Dominic Walsh: dwalsh@southernassembly.ie
 Website: www.interregeurope.eu/bluegreencity

Blue Green City is part-funded by Interreg Europe through the European Regional Development Fund.



MARIE aims to improve regional public policy that supports delivery of Responsible Research and Innovation in design, production, and distribution of innovation in Smart Specialisation Sectors (S3). It promotes ways to prevent negative social and environmental impact and contributes to better quality of life. With a budget of €1.9m/€1.6m ERDF, MARIE brings together ten partners from eight regions in Italy, Romania, Greece, Spain, Finland, Ireland, France & Germany.

MARIE Progress 2022

OECD Masterclasses, February, April & June 2022, Online

The OECD were brought in as advisors to work with partners throughout 2022 to understand the move from S3 to S4 (Sustainable Smart Specialisation Strategies) and how to manage this through a practical, common methodology that is sufficiently broad and flexible to be applied to the current S3 of diverse regions.

The OECD hosted three masterclasses with MARIE partners and stakeholders:

1. Transforming S3 to S4+ - Towards a Framework and Methodology for Measurement
2. Mainstreaming and Measuring Responsible Research and Innovation: Lessons from Practitioners and Academia – Roundtable Dialogue
3. Steps Towards a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for RRI – Stakeholder Workshop

Using the insights and results from the workshops, as well as additional OECD work and publications, and secondary research the OECD produced a report on S3 evolving to S4 which identifies the basic components of a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure such shifts. The report can be viewed on the Southern Regional Assembly website.

Partner Interregional Meeting May 2022 – Athens Greece

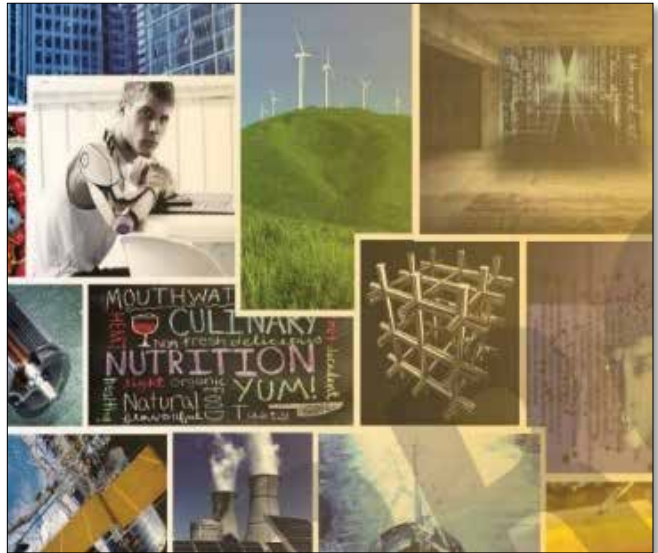
In May 2022, the MARIE project partners met in person after two years of online meetings. Lead Partner, Giulia Bubbolini of CISE, provided an overview of the updated mapping of RRI activities received from MARIE partners.

The Southern Regional Assembly hosted a case study session putting a spotlight on the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.

MARIE Final Event, Galicia Spain, September 2022

The final project meeting was hosted by project partner GAIN in Santiago. Project partners were given the opportunity to update everyone on their RRI progress (Policy Developments). The OECD presented their work on measuring the impact of innovation strategies and more specifically the transition from S3 to S4.

Partners were joined by University of Vigo who spoke on ‘A vision of Science, Technology and Innovation beyond Growth’. They were also joined by the University of Twente who gave an overview of the RRI2SCALE experience. This included a presentation on ‘Multi-stakeholder Dialogues’ introducing partners to the SES (Scenario Exploration Tool) developed by the JRC. This was followed by a presentation on Cross-regional collaboration for better management of innovation which prompted a lively Q&A session.



For further information about MARIE:

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 Twitter: @marieinterreg
 Facebook: @MARIEinterreg

MARIE is part-funded by Interreg Europe, through the European Regional Development Fund



The Southern Regional Assembly is the Irish partner, along with the Circular Bioeconomy Research Group (CircBio) in Munster Technological University, on ROBIN, a Horizon Europe project that aims to empower Europe's regions to adapt their governance models and structures in ways that accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets while promoting social innovation and accounting for different territorial contexts.

ROBIN is a cross-national three year long Coordination and Support Action (01/09/2022-01/08/2025). It brings together 13 partners from five countries across Europe with a total budget of €2.5m. The pilot regions include Andalusia in Spain, Central Macedonia in Greece, Baden-Wuerttemberg in Germany, Zilina in Slovakia, and the Southern Region in Ireland. The lead partner is Q-Plan based in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The project will support five regional authorities from these areas to adapt their governance models to support the scaling up of the bio-based value chains of their ecosystem. ROBIN will allow the participating regions to network and source knowledge from peers and consort with the European Commission's Circular Cities and Regions Initiative's Coordination and Support Office (CCRI-CSO). The project aims to improve regional governance models with increased stakeholder engagement accelerating the circular bioeconomy transition of European regions.

Kick Off Partner Meeting September 2022

On the 26th and 27th of September 2022, the ROBIN partners met in Thessaloniki, Greece to officially kick start the project and discuss the next steps for its successful deployment. In attendance from Ireland was Kevin Lynch, Assistant Director in the Southern Regional Assembly, along with James Gaffey, Co-Director of the CIRC BIO Research Group, MTU.

ROBIN Progress 2022

ROBIN explored the existing governance models in Europe, developed a typology of these models and identified good governance practices. It deepened the knowledge around the barriers, challenges, and opportunities for the uptake of circular bioeconomy governance models through consultation with and active engagement of cross-sectoral regional stakeholders included in the Multi-Actor Regional Constellations (MARC)s of the project.

Work also began on the dissemination and communication of the projects findings and results through a tailored strategy involving the set-up of ROBIN Advisory Board, while also creating synergies with key European and national networks, as well as the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative - Coordination and Support Office (CCRI-CSO).



For further information about ROBIN:

Rebecca Walsh, EU Projects Officer:

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Website: www.robin-project.eu

Twitter: [@robinproject1](https://twitter.com/robinproject1)

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/robinhorizonproject

ETC Network of European Project Officers

The ETC Network provides a forum where European Project Officers working across the Region can benefit and learn from each other by sharing their experiences, networking, and building relationships to enhance the competencies of members in their delivery of European Projects. Since May 2019, the Southern Region European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) Network has grown to include over 230 members.

In 2022 the ETC Network hosted the following virtual events:

March 2022 – Online Webinar

To support members to plan their project applications more effectively for the Interreg programming period 2021-2027, the National Contact Points (NCP's) for each of the Interreg Programmes were invited to speak to give members guidance and insight on the various priorities under each programme, information on funding opportunities, timing and deadlines of the first calls and how to prepare accordingly under each programme, updates on any changes to previous programmes and an opportunity for Q&A.



October 2022 – Online Webinar

This event was focused on four topics:

1. How Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) can work with Local Authorities on ETC Funded projects,
2. What we should be doing now to prepare for upcoming Programme funding calls,
3. What the key priorities are going forward for the Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and
4. Update on the Southern, Eastern and Midland Regional Programme 21-27.



The future for the ETC Network

The Southern Regional Assembly will continue to support, facilitate, and build the ETC Network in the Southern Region to provide opportunities for members to learn, actively participate and network with their peers. This will enhance participation in European Projects and ensure a positive impact for those that live and work in the region.

For further information about the ETC Network or to Join the ETC Network:

Lisa Moran, Project Officer: lmoran@southernassembly.ie
Website: www.southernassembly.ie/etc-network

Irish Regions European Office



The Irish Regions European Office (IREO) is a shared service for the three Regional Assemblies and 31 local authorities of Ireland.

In 2022, the IREO continued to deliver on its strategy, which aims to ensure that the office delivers timely, strategic advice and information on EU policy developments to the three Regional Assemblies and local authorities in Ireland and that it coordinates and supports the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.

This strategy is delivered by:

Raising Awareness and Communication

In June 2022, the IREO organised a visit to Brussels for all three Regional Assemblies. The purpose of this visit was to build awareness of the work of the EU institutions for elected members across Ireland.

The Assemblies attend the European Commission's Berlaymont building for a series of meetings with a range of European Commission officials, covering topics such as Technologies for Smart Communities, EU Energy Policy and the EU's Cohesion Policy.

The Assemblies delegation also met with Commissioner Mairead McGuinness, and visited the European Parliament and met with MEPs from their respective European Constituencies. The Southern Regional Assembly met MEPs Grace O'Sullivan and Sean Kelly.

The IREO published five editions of the newsletter during 2022. This bi-monthly newsletter keeps Irish Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies up to speed with the latest developments on the work of the IREO, the EU policy arena as well as the EU funding landscape.

Influencing European Policy

The IREO continued to monitor and report on EU policy developments and EU funding programmes. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine dominated the EU agenda during 2022. Coupled with the subsequent cost of living crisis, the EU came together strongly as a bloc in response to the invasion. The European Commission also launched the REPowerEU proposal, with the aim to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030.

The EU continued to deal with the UK's exit from the EU and the future relationship through the Trade and Cooperation

Agreement. The IREO worked closely with Irish Members of the Committee of the Regions to ensure that the issues for Ireland in relation to the future relationship, trade, peace, and stability, as well as the role of local and regional authorities, were highlighted across the EU institutions and other Member States.

Representatives from the Southern Regional Assembly joined IREO in Brussels in March 2022 to attend the 8th Cohesion Forum.

The IREO also monitored EU policy developments in relation to wide range of policy areas including the New European Bauhaus, climate action, urban issues, sustainability, just transition, updated TEN-T regulations, smart mobility, health data, equality and the follow up to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Building capacity, networks and partnerships

The IREO presented an update of its work and EU policy developments to the Southern Regional Assembly meeting on 13th May 2022 and has provided regular briefings on the work of the Irish Delegation to the CoR to the Southern Regional Assembly.

The IREO has been involved, with the three Regional Assemblies, in discussions about a possible Atlantic Area Macro Regional Strategy and has been involved in meetings with the Basque country, French, Spanish and Portuguese regions.

The IREO held meetings and is working closely with the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) as well as the Vanguard Initiative and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).

In October 2022, the IREO and elected members met with European Commission officials to discuss Irish participation in the 'European Network of Locally Elected Politicians' which aims to communicate the European Union through an unprecedented alliance between the European and local government structures.

During 2022, the IREO worked with the Committee of the Regions to promote the Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme across Ireland. This programme is a network of politicians who are no older than 40 and hold a mandate at regional or local level in the EU.

Raising the profile of the strengths of local and regional Government

One of the highlights of the year was the IREO organised visit by the CoR President of the Committee of the Regions to Ireland in June 2022. This two-day visit showcased the local government sector in Ireland and the work of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions.



European Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

IREO is the secretariat to the Irish delegation to the Committee of the Regions and co-ordinates the work of the members of the national delegation to the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The CoR's role is to inform the development of EU legislation and future European policies through the input of those most closely representing communities, with a focus on those EU policy areas and proposals that most greatly affect regions and cities.

The CoR mainly presents its views through written opinions or resolutions, which are developed in one of six thematic commissions covering the following policy areas:

- Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX);
- Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER);
- Economic Policy (ECON);
- Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE);
- Natural Resources (NAT);
- Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC).

The Irish Delegation – Southern Region Representatives

The Head of the Irish Delegation is Cllr Michael Murphy, a Southern Regional Assembly representative from Tipperary County Council and below is a list of CoR representatives for the Southern Region for 2020 – 2025.

Full Members	Council
Michael Murphy	Tipperary County Council
Deirdre Forde	Cork City Council
Kieran McCarthy	Cork City Council

Alternate Members	Council
Gillian Coughlan	Cork County Council
Conor McGuinness	Waterford City and County Council
Dan Boyle	Cork City Council

Legislative Works

Irish Members continued to present opinions and make an impact in the Committee of the Regions.

- Cllr Michael Murphy was Rapporteur on 'Strengthening the EU-UK relationship at subnational level and remedying the territorial impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU'. The opinion was adopted in Plenary in April 2022.
- During 2022 Cllr Kieran McCarthy was Rapporteur on two opinions.
 - 'New European Bauhaus - Beautiful, Sustainable, Together' was adopted at the April Plenary.
 - 'Small Urban Areas as Key Actors to Manage a Just Transition' was adopted at Plenary in December 2022.
- In March 2022, the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions and the IREO attended the bi-annual European Summit of Regions and Cities, which was held in Marseille, France.

The Delegation also held meetings with Irish MEPs as well as with the Irish Commission representatives to voice the needs of the Irish local government on the EU stage.

Main discussions and opinions held and adopted in 2022

The June meeting marked the halfway point in the current mandate for the CoR and saw the election of Portugal's Vasco Alves Cordeiro as President following the end of President Apostolos Tzitzikostas' two- and half-year term in office.

The mandate also saw Irish delegation members being elected to new roles with Cllr Kate Feeney being elected as Third Vice President of Renew Europe's CoR delegation and Cllr Kieran McCarthy as Vice President of European Alliance group.

The most important debates held during the year included:

- **January:** High Level Debate on Cohesion Implementation with Elisa FERREIRA, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms.
- **April:** Testimonials from Ukraine: Vitali Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv, and Chairman of the Association of Ukrainian Cities, Vadym Boychenko, Mayor of Mariupol, Andriy Sadovyi, Mayor of Lviv, Ivan Fedorov, Mayor of Melitopol, Tetiana Yehorova-Lutsenko, Chairwoman of the Kharkiv Regional Council
- **June:** Presentation of the priorities of the Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union by Ivan Bartoš, Deputy Prime Minister for Digitalisation and Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic
- **October:** Debate on 27th UN Conference on Climate Change

- **December:** Closing debate on the European Year of Youth and endorsement of the Charter for Youth and Democracy with Margaritis SCHINÁS, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Promoting our European Way of Life

Members of the Irish Delegation to the Committee of the Regions participate in many of the working groups of the CoR including the EU - UK Contact Group, the Brexit Inter-regional group the Digital Futures working group and the Broadband platform.

Annual Financial Statements

Southern Regional Assembly

Income and Expenditure Account as at 31st December 2022

Income	2022	2021
	€	€
Local Authority Contributions	1,371,937	1,553,551
Travel Recoupment EU Programmes	7,220	0
Salary Recoupment EU Programmes	293,952	320,002
General Recoupment EU Programmes	158,178	17,884
Dept of Public Expenditure & Reform	1,154	0
Technical Assistance Recoupment	509,330	383,351
Designated Urban Centre Grants Scheme	3,524,730	1,343,593
First Level Control (FLC) Fees	117,211	89,870
Dividend (IPB)	6,130	7,183
Miscellaneous	0	4
Inter-Company Transfer	0	11,597
Total	<u>5,989,843</u>	<u>3,727,035</u>
Expenditure		
Payroll Costs	1,556,677	1,603,274
Pension Related Deduction	55,603	53,340
Superannuation SSP Scheme	17,379	15,496
Travel & Subsistence – Staff	59,265	3,018
Members Annual Allowance	84,124	73,727
Members SPA / Other Travel	8,526	1,523
Members Training / Conference Allowance	4,625	1,080
Conference Fees	0	90
Office Equipment & Supplies	11,231	10,026
Energy Costs	13,602	4,740
Post & Phone	14,944	18,065
Rates & Water Charges	5,560	7,944
Repairs, Maintenance & Office Costs	11,848	1,409
Consultancy/Professional Fees	220,631	52,066
Annual Contracts	62,289	67,446
Insurance	12,733	2,034
Annual Report	5,617	6,380
Information & Communications	113,671	32,774
Contributions/Fees/Levies (LGMA & Audit)	8,721	9,551
Bank Charges	10,443	15,112
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	4,583	3,898
Regional Planning RSES	49,783	37,748
Depreciation Charge	4,242	3,573
Gateway Grant Scheme – Project Payments	3,524,730	1,343,593
Miscellaneous	3,227	3,385
Inter-Account Transfer	-1,593	8,326
Total Expenses	<u>5,862,462</u>	<u>3,379,620</u>
Excess of Income over Expenditure	127,381	347,416

Southern Regional Assembly
Balance Sheet as at 31st Dec 2022

	2022	2021
	€	€
Fixed Assets	1,004,080	1,004,797
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	2,203,645	2,234,645
Debtors	879,783	710,261
Prepayments	3,085	0
	3,086,514	2,944,906
Current Liabilities		
Creditors & Accruals	102,433	89,918
Credit Card	1,142	148
	103,575	90,066
Net Current Assets	2,982,938	2,854,840
Net Assets	3,987,018	3,859,637
<i>Financed by</i>		
Balance at beginning of year	3,859,637	3,524,474
Inter-Dept Movement on Reserves	0	-12,253
Excess of Income over Expenditure	127,381	347,416
	3,987,018	3,859,637

Staff of the Southern Regional Assembly 2022

David Kelly	Director
Kevin Lynch	Assistant Director
Enda Hogan	Assistant Director
Dominic Walsh	Regional Planning Officer
Robert Fennelly	Regional Planning Officer
Brigh Ryan	Regional Planning Officer
Sharon Murray	Administrative Officer – Finance & HR
Vincent Dunphy	Administrative Officer
Michael Buckley	Auditor
Siobhan Rudden	Administrative Officer
Karen Coughlan	Administrative Officer
Rose Power	Administrative Officer
Marie Harnett	Senior Staff Officer
Sarah Daveron	EU Executive
Breda Curran	Development Officer
Samantha Richardson	Development Officer
Lisa Moran	EU Projects Officer
Áine Whelan	EU Projects Officer
Eve Hayden	Senior First Level Controller
Edel Hunt	Senior First Level Controller
Elayne McDonnell	Senior First Level Controller
Yvonne Cooney	Assistant Staff Officer
Róisín Kiely	Assistant Staff Officer
Colm Walsh	Clerical Officer
Anna Higgins	Clerical Officer
Elaine Gallagher	Clerical Officer
Maria Murphy	Clerical Officer
Alice Byrne Kelly	Clerical Officer
Catherine Connaughton	Clerical Officer

Appendices

1. Glossary of Terms

CCDP	City & County Development Plans
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure & Reform
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
EMRA	Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FLC	First Level Control
IRES	Irish Regions European Office
LAP	Local Area Plan
LECP	Local Economic & Community Plan
NDP	National Development Plan
NOAC	National Oversight and Audit Commission
NPF	National Planning Framework
NWRA	Northern & Western Regional Assembly
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
RPO	Regional Planning Objective
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

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