

JASPER'S STAKEHOLDER MEETING 2022

JASPER'S support to sustainable and innovative EU funded projects in the current crisis

About the event

The JASPERS Stakeholder Meeting is an event organized by the European Investment Bank (EIB), in partnership with the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG MOVE, DG NEAR), and with the participation of representatives from beneficiaries and administration of countries. It is held annually, in different Member States.

Impressions

from JASPERS' Stakeholders Meeting

JASPERS held its Stakeholders Meeting on 27th October 2022, which took place in hybrid format, both in-person and online. Prior to the day's sessions, a welcome and opening dinner was hosted on Wednesday evening 26th October. The dinner opened the meetings, was an excellent opportunity for all physical participants to network, and in many cases, actually meet each one another for the first time.

The JASPERS Stakeholder was a great opportunity for Member States, pre-accession countries, the European Commission and the EIB to reconnect and share their experiences, needs and expectations. This is particularly important at the beginning of a new Multiannual Financial Framework, marked with having significant amounts of funding available and the risk of not enough high-quality mature projects for Member States and regions to absorb these funds.

Parties to the meeting widely recognised that JASPERS has a fundamental role to play to support the Member States in getting projects off the ground, to turn the European Union's ambitious climate, social, digital and economic agendas into a tangible and just reality.

The event attracted close to 200 participants from 15 countries, both in-person and on-line, with a majority coming from Member States collaborating with JASPERS, as well as managing authorities. It was opened by EIB Vice-President **Lilyana Pavlova**, Czech Deputy Prime Minister **Ivan Bartoš**, DG REGIO's European Commissioner **Elisa Ferreira**, DG REGIO Director **Emma Toledano Laredo**. It was jointly chaired by **Werner Schmidt**, Head of JASPERS, Director, Projects Directorate, European Investment Bank.

Main Points

Takeaways from the Meeting

Many of the key issues in this year's Stakeholder Meeting were previously raised in 2021, and remain very relevant today. Present and future challenges were addressed by posing panellists and participants four fundamental questions:

1. Needs of Member States,
2. the EU response, and JASPERS as part of EU response,
3. the demand for JASPERS services,
4. new opportunities and challenges.

Naturally, issues stemming from several crisis were at the top of participants' attention. Key issues are:

- How to deal with cost increases in ongoing projects, and the need for JASPERS implementation support.
- Need for capacity building at all levels of administration.
- Assist in strengthening the administrative and technical capacity of the authorities and beneficiaries.
- Climate change resilience (adaptation) and neutrality (mitigation).

- Promoting Do No Significant Harm principles.
- Both innovation and digitalization in investments.
- The overlap between the end of 2014-2020 and start of 2021-2027 financial perspectives—closure and the new project pipeline. (465 assignments/projects).
- DG MOVE: TEN-T Core network to be completed by 2030, and comprehensive by 2040.
- Flexibility in EU rules in this period (CARE- FAST CARE).
- Focus on mutual tasks with JASPERS for the future, including tripartite Country Work Programs.
- Project identification and prioritization.
- Project preparation: documentation, demands assessment, option analysis, scaling, economic appraisal and compliance with all EU requirements.
- Optimizing the most effective distribution of resources (both financial, and administrative capacity).

The one-day hybrid conference itself was a very positive experience, permitting both in-person and online participation, including chat opportunities to raise questions for panellists. This new format in 2022 for the annual event has enabled wider participation and brought great interest and fruitful exchanges. We look forward to the next live meeting in physical presence, which may possibly be organised under the Spanish Presidency in the second half of 2023.

Content of the Panels and Sessions

Opening Remarks

With the kind help of EIB Communications' own moderator Constance Kann, the Stakeholder Meeting sessions began on Thursday.

The first Opening Remarks were from EIB Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova, DG REGIO's European Commissioner Elisa Ferreira, and Czech Deputy Prime Minister Ivan Bartoš.

EIB Vice President Pavlova noted: "*JASPERS continues to support real projects of benefit, thanks to its in-house multidisciplinary team*".

European Commissioner Elisa Ferreira emphasized the importance of a Just Transition, and the important roles that JASPERS can play in delivering those objectives. The EIB's **Cohesion Lending Policy** also plays a very important role, and she thanked all partners involved in Cohesion investments, and JASPERS in particular.

The Czech Deputy Prime Minister Ivan Bartoš was very appreciative of JASPERS, and "*appreciates all assistance that JASPERS has [provided] and can provide in the current crisis [...]*"

First Panel Discussion on How can JASPERS best support the EU Member States in the current programming period: Opportunities and Challenges

Remarks

The Opening Panel Discussion was dedicated to broad discussions among panellists and the audience, with testimonials from DG REGIO, DG MOVE, and managing authorities from Bulgaria and Poland sharing their experiences.

One point was raised multiple times during the sessions. *“JASPERS is needed at both national and local levels for capacity building in public administration. This is a strategic step in the investment process.”* Several speakers, ranging from DG REGIO, managing authorities, to beneficiary alike, repeated this.



The first Session was penned by Werner Schmidt, EIB Director and Head of JASPERS. *“In the absence of major projects, the entire responsibility is left upon Member States. Once the strategic prioritization is made in the Country Work Programs, what can be done to obtain even more value added from JASPERS?”*

Emma Toledano Laredo, Director, DG Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission then presented the policy and practical challenges, with emphasis on new challenges the countries will face in the absence of major projects, but with substantial grant funding in the regions. She emphasized the needs for capacity building, down to the beneficiaries at the local level. The director focused on current and potential future JASPERS support through its core offering, namely tailored and successive actions together with the EU to address the crisis. Through FAST-CARE, the EU can speed up assistance and simplify procedures, including increased flexibility to phase investments.

“JASPERS can assist through knowledge transfer and capacity building support, to develop a robust project pipeline, that is both resilient and consistent.” She stressed the need to demonstrate value for money from technical assistance, to realize the EU objective of a social green and fair transition.

In light of the absence of major projects and the increased role national administration in realizing the EU objectives through EU grant funded projects, the continuation of JASPERS support to member states will be even more important than before.

Philippe Chantraine, Head of Unit, DG MOVE, highlighted the needs for assistance in Fit for 55, with large needs in the area of knowledge transfer, for which JASPERS is ideally suited. The revision of TEN-T priorities and greening of investments underscores these needs. Specifically, the TEN-T Core network should be completed by 2030, and the comprehensive network by 2040.

Our colleague from the managing authority in Bulgaria summarized the needs for JASPERS assistance this way:

“Capacity Building and Quality Assurance are key tasks in 2021-2027”, and JASPERS is ideally suited. This is key in avoiding errors in planning.

“There is splendid cooperation with both the EC and JASPERS”. “The European Commission is more and more frequently *in the position of a fire brigade, from crisis to crisis*” added the managing authority from Poland. Project phasing was pertinent issue universally across managing authorities in attendance. Possible future EU enlargement was discussed, in

particular in the context of Ukraine, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Moldova. The suggestion is to invite broad delegations from these existing, and possibly future Stakeholders to the next meeting in 2023.

To this end, in the view of the managing authorities in Poland, “*JASPERS is in a perfect position to provide technical assistance in Ukraine*”, once such rebuilding efforts gather scale.

Session I

New challenges for the 2021-2027 perspective and JASPERS support for successful delivery of projects

In summary, key points raised among our speakers:

- How to work on all aspects of projects in this period of crisis and instability.
- Enormous challenges related to the war in Ukraine, with the city of Wrocław facing 500% inflation in the costs of energy, while coping with over 250,000 migrants from the Ukraine, for city services, schools, accommodation etc.
- DG MOVE on the JASPERS study for a new “Solidarity Lanes” Railway line Poland – Romania through Ukraine, to facilitate grain exports.
- Europe in general has a need to focus on short and long-term energy needs, in particular REPower.
- Most managing authorities' present raise the pressing issue and impact of cost increases in countries, impacting around 130 new or modified projects. This creates complications both for advisory assignments and IQR appraisals. Consequences include beneficiaries and ministries negotiating difficult price indexation variants with contracting companies, while construction works themselves are halted.

Session II

JASPERS support for innovative projects

In the **second session**, the discussions focused on JASPERS support for the successful delivery of innovative projects. Speakers addressed what support is needed in terms of advisory, capacity building and appraisal of projects in 2021-27, at the level of countries and beneficiaries.

The topics outlined the services provided by JASPERS, lessons learned, and challenges in the near future. These include:

- Support to projects in **health** sector, including infrastructure, capacity building for management and efficiencies in operations.
- Investment in **basic research** infrastructures.
- **Electric charging** infrastructure in Greece – supported in a joint effort by **JASPERS, PASA and EPEC**.
- Innovation in **data management** – information gathering and data management in a very effective way in the Balkans.
- Role of JASPERS as an advisor in the project pipeline and investment process – providing **confidence** to beneficiaries and benchmarking progress.

Session III

Sustainability of projects supported by JASPERS

The third session then covered evolution of advisory support in enhancing the sustainability of infrastructure investment. JASPERS advisory support was discussed across the entire project timeline and investment process. Participants again stressed the needs for capacity building support, and that JASPERS has contributed - through direct project support and horizontal assignments in various areas - to capacity building in "our" countries and their institutions responsible for managing EU funds. These institutions - in turn - have gained competences to carry out a full project cycle assessment, including futureproofing and sustainability concerns. Discussions included:

- Clear and specific examples of investments in sustainability in **water and waste** sectors.
- Structural support to the waste & water sectors in Greece.
- **Sustainability Proofing** and the relevant support to Just Transition.
- Detailed description of broad Beneficiary experiences, assignments and guidance received from JASPERS, in particular JASPERS Coordination and capacity building.

We finalised these sessions listening to the relevant work being carried out in **sustainable mobility**, in close collaboration between DG MOVE and JASPERS.

- Extensive experience with Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs).
- Guide on **decarbonisation** in SUMPs.
- **SUMPs: Collaboration between DG MOVE and JASPERS Coordination and Capacity Building** on training for next 2 years!

In summary, most participants agreed that the overriding challenge would stem from implementing strategy through climate change mitigation measures, and how they impact the entire project cycle.

We think it is safe to say that JASPERS has contributed - through direct project support and also horizontal assignments in various areas - to building the capacity of institutions responsible for managing EU funds in its country of operations, and these institutions, in turn, have gained competences to carry out a full project cycle assessment. Speakers agreed that such capacity building support must be continued.

We concluded that in the future the JASPERS support will be focused with a strategic context and tailored to different – and changing/evolving – country's needs.

Closing

In the Closing to the meeting, Werner Schmidt described [the ongoing EIB support to Cohesion](#) and related advisory needs. He noted the positive and meaningful feedback on JASPERS work, and praise from beneficiaries. All participants expanded their network of contacts and clarified many ideas for future action and areas for further development.

The emphasis is on the preparation of good quality projects, in particular given the current crisis, complexities in achieving the EU Objectives related to the Green Deal, and by extension, the Climate Bank Roadmap.

And to sum it up, there is "*Overall, very good feedback on the meeting from all of you!*"

The presentations of all sessions are [accessible here](#).

**The JASPERS support for the
2021-27 multi-annual financial framework**

As discussed, and elaborated-upon during the meetings, JASPERS support will continue in the following areas, in addition to new needs that may arise:

- Project identification and prioritization.
- Compliance vs good practice justifications.
- Project preparation: documentation, demands assessment, option analysis, scaling, economic appraisal, and compliance with all EU requirements.
- Climate change resilience (adaptation) and neutrality (mitigation).
- Promoting Do No Significant Harm principles.
- Co-financing/Financial structure.
- Capacity Building at all levels of administration.
- Assist in strengthening the administrative and technical capacity of the authorities and beneficiaries.
- All aspects of procurement.
- Financial sustainability / Maintenance expenses.

The points raised concerning new areas to consider for future capacity building support are noted, and include:

- Capacity building in your administration, both at managing authorities and at beneficiary and the intermediate-body level.
- Streamlining climate considerations in wider project preparation, including on Do No Significant Harm and climate adaption criteria.
- Assistance in the development of capacity for project selection and appraisal.