

TALENT BOOSTER MECHANISM

Lessons learned from support to regions to attract and retain talent

Rural Pact Good Practice Webinar, 10 June 2026
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Cities, Communities, People

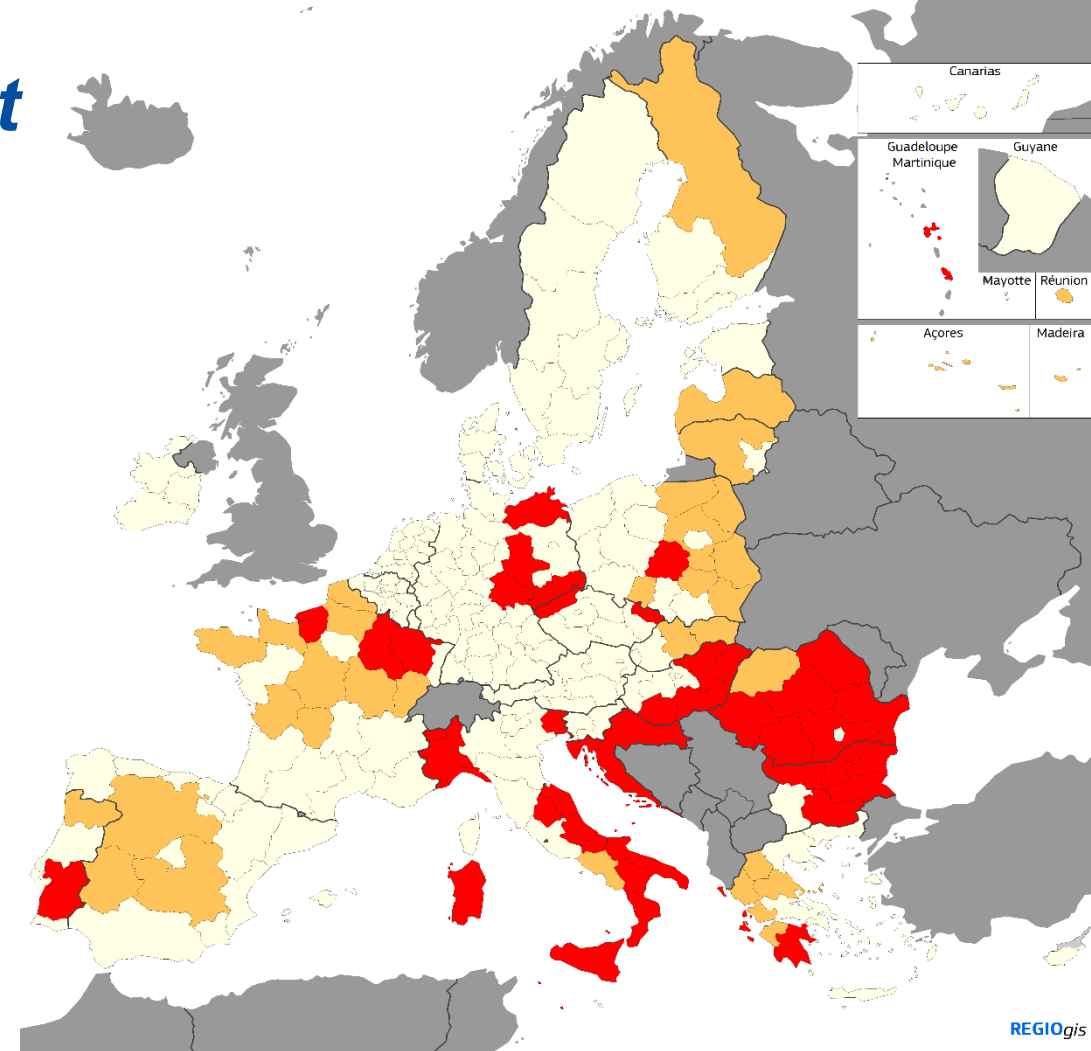
HARNESSING TALENT PLATFORM

A new boost for EU Regions

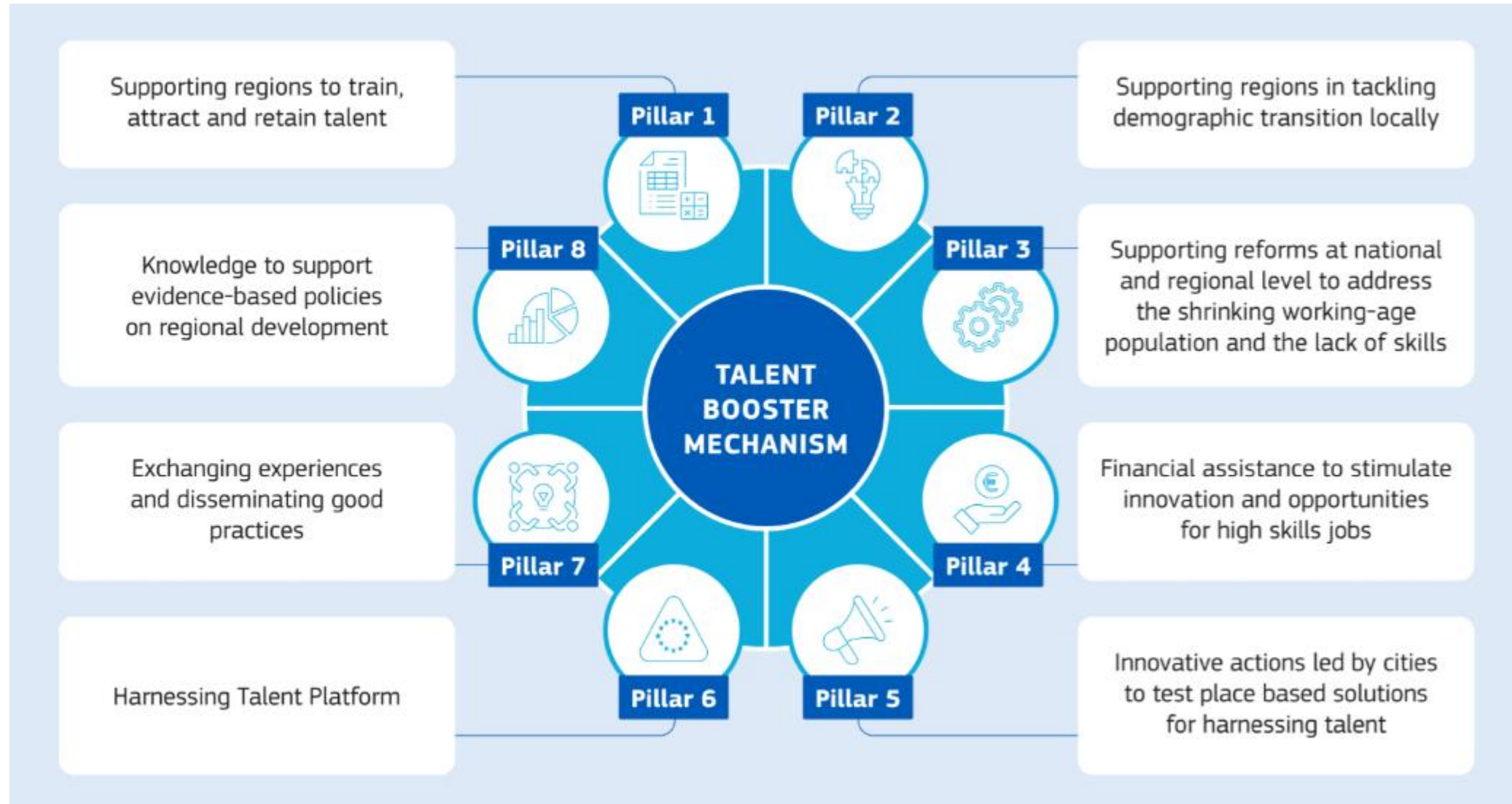


Communication on *Harnessing talent in Europe's regions* (January 2023)

- **16 countries** with regions facing talent-related challenges (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain).
- **46 regions** affected by sharp workforce decline and low/stagnating share of tertiary educated in a talent development trap (*red*).
- **36 regions** with net out-migration of their younger cohort at risk of falling into a talent development trap (*yellow*).



TALENT BOOSTER MECHANISM ARCHITECTURE



Talent Booster Mechanism – results

Direct support for regions and cities

- 21 regions in/or at risk of a talent development trap are benefiting from support on the ground through direct technical assistance to adapt to demographic changes and harness talent.
- EU talent & innovation support: (23 projects in TSI for skills/reform; 18 interregional partnerships (72 regions, 25 MS) through I3 instrument for innovation/jobs; 4 urban networks under EUI for shrinking-city talent strategies).

Harnessing Talent Platform

- Knowledge repository
 - ✓ More than 500 resources available in the HTP Knowledge Hub.
 - ✓ **10 academic articles** examining key drivers of talent development and demographic dynamics across European territories.
 - ✓ **Collection of 20 selected good practices from EU regions**
- Working groups deliverables
 - ✓ Comprehensive **package of outputs** based on practical experience – policy recommendations, self-assessment tool, toolkits, guide for SMEs', analytical reports, good practices catalogue

TBM – lessons learned for regions



1. Talent retention is as important as talent attraction
2. Place-based solutions work better than one-size-fits-all policies
3. Quality of life is a key factor in talent decisions
4. Skills development must be linked to local economic opportunities
5. Governance, collaboration and engagement are essential for success
6. Demographic decline requires long-term strategies

TBM – key takeaways for rural areas

- 1. Integrated strategies of rural areas** - Rural development needs policy that combines housing, services transport, digital, skills, and economic development in a single territorial strategy.
- 2. Youth anchoring before departure** - Investing in rural internships, apprenticeships, and campus schemes that connect young people to rural economic life before they leave — bringing them back is far harder and more expensive than helping them see a future before they go.
- 3. Citizens engagement in local governance and partnerships** — ensuring that talent strategies respond to real local needs and create a shared sense of ownership. Partnerships between local authorities, businesses, education providers, NGO and communities enable coordinated actions on skills, employment, innovation and quality of life.

ANNEX

TBM – deliverables in the rural context

Pillar 1: direct technical assistance to 11 regions in talent development trap

Alentejo (Portugal) - sparsely populated agricultural region in Portugal - received a roadmap specifically addressing rural healthcare access, agri-food talent, and remote working attraction strategies. A new Alentejo Talent Observatory was established to collect and visualise data on demographic shifts, current talent resources, and gaps in workforce needs, with a focus on attracting and managing talent.

Pillar 2: direct assistance to 10 regions at risk of falling into talent development trap

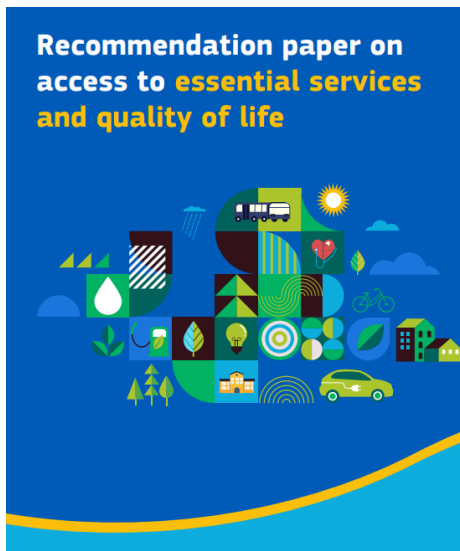
Castilla y Leon (Spain) - innovative approaches across three dimensions: land-use and spatial planning in fragmented territories; multi-level governance and finance; service delivery models ensuring healthcare, childcare, education and transport despite dispersed populations.

The REHABITARE programme — renovating unused municipally-owned buildings (former schools, doctors' houses, rectories) to create affordable rural housing for young people — was highlighted as a model for sustainable rural repopulation.

TBM – deliverables in the rural context

Working Groups: Digital, Health, R&I, Territorial — producing toolkits, recommendation papers, good practice catalogue

Toolkit for implementing policies on gender equality, multiculturalism, diversity, and social inclusion supports stronger social cohesion, democratic participation, and economic territorial resilience by helping local actors design, implement, and monitor inclusive policies that leave no one behind and help **increase the attractiveness of rural areas as inclusive and accepting places to live and work**, and their capacity to promoting, retaining and attracting diverse talent they need.



Recommendation Paper on access to essential services and quality of life identifies the key challenges and proposes actionable solutions and policy recommendations to **ensure equitable, high-quality, and sustainable service provision across all territories**.

TBM – deliverables in the rural context

Good practices (with rural application) featured on the Harnessing Talent Platform

AURORAL (25 partners from 10 European countries): Digital tools for rural areas—smart health, transport, farming & energy—to cut digital exclusion and stem talent drain.

Fundão Embraces (PT): actions to counter population decline and rural desertification in the central interior of Portugal

Plan 130 (ES): Spanish national initiative to strengthen territorial cohesion by promoting urban–rural linkages, economic reactivation, and social inclusion—particularly for women and young people.

Aragon Retorno Joven (ES): launched by the Aragonese Youth Institute, aimed to facilitate the return of young Aragonese professionals who had spent over 15 months outside of Spain. It provided a comprehensive support system, including financial assistance, job search services, housing support, psychological support and personalised counselling.

Talent Booster Mechanism Project Tracker

Countries and Regions

Select an item



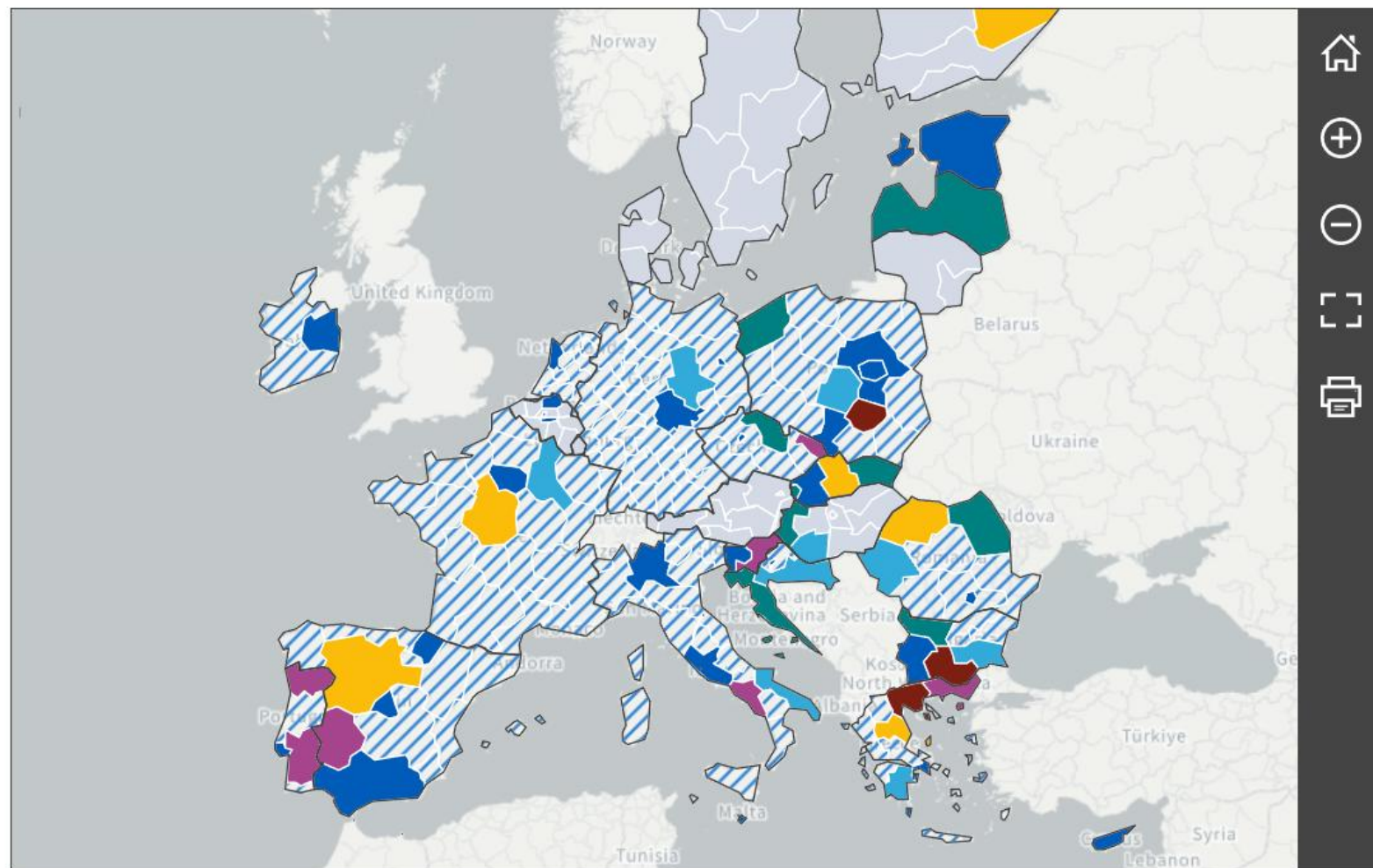
Pillars

Select an item



Legend

-  Pillar 1 - Technical Assistance
-  Pillar 2 - Technical Assistance
-  Pillar 3 - Technical Support Instrument
-  Pillar 4 - Interregional I3 Instrument
-  Pillar 5 - European Urban Initiative
-  Multi Pillar
-  National projects



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European
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