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**What Future for Cohesion Policy? An Academic and Policy Debate****Organized by:****Regional Studies Association, in collaboration with the European Commission and the  
Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy****16-18 March 2011****Bled, Slovenia****Conference Overview by Stilianos Alexiadis**

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A conference involving academic and policy debate took place in Bled, Slovenia in March 2011. This conference was organized jointly by the Regional Studies Association and the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG REGIO), with the contribution of Slovenian Government Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy.

The major research orientation of the event is inspired by the recent Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (published every three years). Overall, these reports describe in detail the progress in achieving the aim of regional cohesion in the European Union (EU). The contributions of the EU, national and regional governments in this aim, are also outlined in these reports.

Taking the Fifth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, as a point of departure, the conference put particular emphasis on the future architecture of cohesion policy. More specifically, the main areas covered in the conference were towards analyzing regional disparities, assessing the contribution of the EU, national and regional governments to regional cohesion, the impact of cohesion policies together with extensive discussions on the cohesion policy after 2013.

This conference is the first to provide a forum for international academic debate on the Fifth Cohesion Report between researchers, specialised in regional theory and empirics together with senior officials from various European institutions.

In general, the papers and presentations in the aforementioned conference were concentrated on a series of key topics. These included, the contribution of cohesion policy to the recently formulated strategy 'Europe 2020', the territorial coverage of the policy, policy performance and effectiveness efficiency of governance structures and implementation arrangements the relationship between cohesion policy and other EU structural policies.