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Digitalising the surroundings of metropolitan areas *How a better connectivity can improve a peripheral region's attractiveness?*

On 14 May 2020, [Next2Met](#) partners and stakeholders came together for their second Policy Learning Event during an online meeting hosted by the Office of Lower Austria Federal Government. This open event aimed at fostering interregional exchange in order to increase the attractiveness of the regions through soft digitalisation measures. Bringing together more than 40 participants despite the online nature of the meeting, the event led to active discussions on potential paths for cooperation. More than ever in the context of COVID-19, the event enabled all participants to reflect on the essential role of digitalisation for peripheral areas.

Coming from different European regions sharing similar challenges, this event was an opportunity for the participants to share good practices of soft digitalisation and to learn from other regions' initiatives. Addressing digital networks, the "Last Mile" connectivity, and Glass Fibre infrastructures, all these actions aimed at using technology as a tool to improve the physical and virtual connectivity and thus vitality of peripheral areas.

This event was also a time to reflect on the current role of digitalisation for the peripheral areas. In the context of COVID-19, the attractiveness of these regions is more than ever re-thought. The participants reflected on a new society model, where digitalisation of the peripheral regions would be the key to tap their full potential of attractiveness. **Mr Bernhard Gerhardt**, from the Office of the Lower Austrian Federal Government, reminded the motto of the digitalisation strategy of Lower Austria: "*Use the digital transformation. For the country, for the people.*"

This second Policy Learning Event brought together various stakeholders and partners who warmly welcomed working together towards the decrease of structural gaps between the metropolitan and peripheral areas. This moment was an opportunity to get inspiration from other stakeholders, to discuss the transferability of the projects, and to exchange some advice on similar initiatives across Europe all just at the click of a mouse.

In Autumn 2020, a third Policy Learning Event will be organised by Next2Met partners from Barcelona Provincial Council. Considering the evolution of the situation, the event will be either organised in person or online.

For further information or to request an interview, please contact:
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Next2Met is an innovative European cooperation project co-founded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Interreg Europe Programme. For further information about Next2Met, visit the project's online media

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