

Thursday 7 October 2010

EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013

P7_TA(2010)0356

European Parliament resolution of 7 October 2010 on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013

(2011/C 371 E/07)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission 'EUROPE 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010) 2020),
- having regard to the Conclusions of the European Council of 25-26 March 2010,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 (EUCO 13/10) and in particular its adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy,
- having regard to the position paper endorsed by the Committee on Regional Development at its meeting of 13 July 2010,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Strategic Report of 2010 by the Commission on the Implementation of the Cohesion Policy Programmes adopted at the 3023rd Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on 14 June 2010,
- having regard to the question of 14 July 2010 to the Commission on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013 (O-01110/2010 – B7-0466/2010),
- having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

1. Insists that cohesion policy which aims at reducing disparities between the levels of development of European regions and mobilising growth potential to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion has proved to be essential to the process of European integration, that it is a policy with European added value, facilitating the pursuit of modernisation and sustainable growth as well as demonstrating European solidarity, and that in conformity with the spirit of the Treaties, these characteristics require an EU-wide regional policy implemented throughout the entire territory of the Union and embracing all the European regions;

2. Notes that the current accumulation of long- and short-term challenges ⁽¹⁾ that the European Union faces entails the adoption of an adapted EU 2020 strategy capable of creating a framework favourable to stable and sustainable economic growth and job creation in Europe; stresses the fact that cohesion policy implementation is indispensable for the success of this strategy, while always remaining an independent policy providing a framework for establishing strong synergies between all European policies;

3. Rejects any attempt to renationalise the policy; considers, furthermore, that, as the present financial framework has an important impact on regional development, it is necessary for the regional dimension to be fully considered in the proposed review of the EU budget and the future Financial Framework, and that a strong and well-financed EU regional policy is a condition sine qua non for achieving social, economic and territorial cohesion;

⁽¹⁾ See Regions 2020, An Assessment of Future Challenges for EU Regions, Commission Staff Working Document, November 2008.

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4. Draws attention to the fact that in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon territorial cohesion implies a targeted approach to territorial development, ensuring polycentric development, by creating synergies and avoiding the sectoral dispersion of regional policy resources, to which end there must also be sufficient flexibility to accommodate regional specificities and support regions which are lagging behind in their efforts to overcome their socioeconomic difficulties; considers that the outermost regions, border regions, regions with specific geographical features and other regions facing specific development challenges must continue to benefit from specific provisions;
5. Underlines the necessity to use past experience, examples of best practices and successful past Community initiatives in order to adopt a more focused approach to the urban dimension of cohesion policy; stresses further the fact that cities play a dynamic role in regional economic development, giving a positive economic stimulus to the surrounding rural areas, and considers, therefore, that in the next programming period financial resources should be allocated for investments in urban as well as suburban projects and takes the view that the application of an appropriate instrument should be considered in order to achieve these objectives;
6. Stresses the fact that multi-level governance is one of the key principles of cohesion policy and is fundamental to ensuring the quality of the decision-making process, strategic planning and implementation of objectives; considers therefore that in future an integrated approach to policy implementation should be mandatory; further considers that the principle of subsidiarity in its strengthened and widened form as defined in the TFEU, as well as a better defined partnership principle, and transparency are essential elements for the correct implementation of all EU policies and should be reinforced accordingly;
7. Is of the opinion that the basic design of current objectives should remain and territorial cooperation, which has a clear European added value, should be enhanced, while other measures, including earmarking and good practices, should be assessed and common problems and their solutions identified; considers that these measures could include the setting of common objectives and the rational use of shared resources and that spending should be concentrated on core priorities which constitute European added value;
8. Calls for the architecture of post-2013 cohesion policy to offer a simple, fair and transparent transition regime taking into account past experiences and the latest trends in the social and economic situation of the regions concerned, as well as enabling them to continue on their paths towards growth and development;
9. Considers that GDP must remain the main criterion for determining eligibility for regional policy assistance, while other measurable indicators might be added if they are proved to be relevant, leaving room for national authorities to apply, at the appropriate level of decision-making, other indicators which take into account the specific attributes of regions and cities;
10. Insists that the European Social Fund should remain in the framework of the regulation on general provisions on the cohesion policy funds, but needs its own rules;
11. Calls for rural development, in the framework of the 2nd pillar of the CAP, to be coordinated with cohesion development objectives and be managed at regional level to ensure that it is adapted to needs;
12. Would prefer cohesion policy and its delivery system to be more result-oriented and aim at increased efficiency and effectiveness, establishing an optimal balance between quality of performance and financial control; points out that this requires significant improvements in monitoring and evaluation systems, increased efficiency in administrative capacity and error reduction levels as well as the identification of objective and measurable indicators that are comparable across the EU;
13. Shares the view that simplification of policy implementation has to continue and be accompanied by the simplification of national and regional procedures; in this context, stresses the need to establish the correct balance between procedural simplicity and efficiency and good financial management, in the hope that cohesion policy will therefore become a user-friendly policy, with increased visibility;

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14. Encourages the use of financial engineering instruments, revolving funds and global grants, and calls for simplified access to risk capital and micro-finance; believes that Member States should make greater use of the available technical assistance resources to enhance the capacities of local and regional authorities and other stakeholders, in particular NGOs and SMEs;

15. Is of the opinion that regional development policy is at the heart of the Union's economic, social and territorial development and therefore merits a formal ministerial structure to provide a political platform, and that the management and policy design role of the Commission should also be enhanced;

16. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

Future of the European Social Fund

P7_TA(2010)0357

European Parliament resolution of 7 October 2010 on the future of the European Social Fund

(2011/C 371 E/08)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 25 and 26 March 2010,
- having regard to the conclusions of the European Council of 17 June 2010 (EUCO13/10), and in particular its adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy,
- having regard to the 2010 OECD report concerning the role of education during this time of crisis,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Strategic Report of 2010 by the Commission on the Implementation of the Cohesion Policy Programmes adopted at the 3023rd Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg, 14 June 2010,
- having regard to Article 6(e) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE),
- having regard to Article 156 TFEU,
- having regard to Article 162 TFEU,
- having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

1. Notes the key role played by the European Social Fund (ESF) in improving employment and job opportunities, promoting the adaptation of workers' skills to the demands of the labour market, and workers' integration into the labour market, and reinforcing social inclusion;

2. Draws attention to the four Employment Guidelines adopted by the European Parliament and welcomes the fact that the objectives include promoting employment and combating poverty in the context of integration/reintegration into working life through training;