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(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Implementation of cohesion policy programmes for 2007-2013

P7_TA(2011)0283

European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2011 on the Report 2010 on the implementation of the cohesion policy programmes for 2007-2013 (2010/2139(INI))

(2012/C 390 E/01)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 174 to 178 thereof,
- having regard to the Commission's Communication of 31 March 2010: 'Cohesion policy: Strategic Report 2010 on the implementation of the programmes 2007-2013' (COM(2010)01110),
- having regard to the Commission's Staff Working Document of 31 March 2010: 'Accompanying document to the Commission's Communication of 31 March 2010 – Cohesion policy: Strategic Report 2010 on the implementation of the programmes 2007-2013' (SEC(2010)0360),
- having regard to the Commission's Staff Working Paper of 25 October 2010, 'Cohesion Policy: Responding to the economic crisis, a review of the implementation of cohesion policy measures adopted in support of the European Economic Recovery Plan' (SEC(2010)1291),
- having regard to the Commission's Staff Working Document of 14 November 2008: 'Regions 2020 - an Assessment of Future Challenges for EU Regions' (SEC(2008)2868),
- 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 Commission's Communication of 26 January 2011 'Regional Policy Contributing to Sustainable Growth in Europe 2020' (COM(2011)0017),
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund, and in particular to Article 7 thereof ⁽²⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 371, 27.12.2006, p. 1.

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- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 397/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/702/EC of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 24 March 2009 on the implementation of the Structural Funds Regulation 2007-2013: the results of the negotiations on the national cohesion strategies and the operational programmes ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the implementation of the synergies of research and innovation earmarked funds in Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 concerning the European Fund of Regional Development and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development in cities and regions as well as in the Member States and the Union ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 December 2010 on achieving real territorial, social and economic cohesion within the EU – a sine qua non for global competitiveness? ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the Commission's Information Paper No 1: Earmarking of 28 February 2007 (COCOF/2007/0012/00),
- having regard to the Commission's information note 'Indicative structure for the national strategic reports 2009' of 18 May 2009 (COCOF 09/0018/01),
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Strategic Report of 2010 by the Commission on the Implementation of the Cohesion Policy Programmes adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 14 June 2010,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'Cohesion policy: strategic report 2010 on the implementation of the programmes 2007-2013' of 1-2 December 2010 (CdR 159/2010),
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 14 July 2010: 'How to foster efficient partnership in the management of cohesion policy programmes, based on good practices from the 2007-2013 cycle' (ECO/258),
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Transport and Tourism (A7-0111/2011),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 126, 21.5.2009, p. 3.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 132, 29.5.2010, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 291, 21.10.2006, p. 11.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 117 E, 6.5.2010, p. 79.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 104.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0473.

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- A. whereas, according to Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion, and in particular shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions such as rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicap, and whereas the EU 2020 Strategy has to be taken into account to ensure that the EU becomes a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy,
- B. whereas cohesion policy plays a pivotal role on the way towards full achievement of the EU 2020 goals, in particular in the field of employment and social affairs, at all governance levels and in all geographical areas,
- C. whereas the strategic dimension of cohesion policy guaranteeing consistency with the European Union's priorities – making Europe and its regions more attractive places in which to invest and work, improving knowledge and innovation for growth and creating more and better jobs – is provided and highlighted through Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter: the General Regulation), the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion (hereinafter: the Strategic Guidelines), the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and the Operational Programmes (OP),
- D. whereas the strategic reporting exercise represents a new instrument of cohesion policy, introduced in the present programming period through the General Regulation as an instrument for examining the implementation of Strategic Guidelines, aiming at increasing the strategic content and promoting the transparency and accountability of cohesion policy, and whereas lessons should be learnt from the information and experience gained when planning the next programming period;
- E. whereas Lisbon earmarking is the exercise whereby subsets of the agreed 86 priority schemes were identified as specific priorities under the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Agenda and whereas, for the Convergence objective regions, 47 priority themes were identified as earmarked priorities, while in Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective regions only 33 priority themes were identified,
- F. whereas for the 2009 national strategic reports, the Commission and the Member States agreed to exchange data only on the priority themes by objective, with a target date of 30 September 2009 for extraction, a date when Member States were still suffering from the effects of the economic crisis, with some facing initial difficulties at the beginning of the programming period, and whereas it is expected that more informative data can be gleaned from the 2013 Strategic Report,
- G. whereas European regions are still facing striking economic, social and environmental disparities, partly as a natural consequence of the last two enlargements and also due to the direct effects of the global financial and economic crisis, even though these disparities have shrunk over the past decade through the active contribution of cohesion policy which is crucial for ensuring competitiveness and economic growth while taking into account regional specificities;
- H. whereas cohesion policy has been a key element of the European Economic Recovery Plan (EERP), demonstrating the importance of the Structural Funds as tools of economic stimulus, in particular for small businesses, sustainability and energy efficiency, and whereas the Commission was asked to present a report in 2010 about the uptake of measures adopted as part of Europe's response to the crisis,
1. Welcomes the Commission's strategic report on the implementation of the cohesion policy programmes co-financed by the Structural Funds; congratulates Member States on their efforts to prepare their first national strategic reports, which have proved to be a valuable source of information on implementation;

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2. Points out that, when making comparative analyses, it should be taken into consideration that five Member States extracted their data at a more recent date and one at an earlier date; considers that it is more appropriate to compare the progress made by individual Member States with the EU average;

3. Considers that transparency in the allocation of funds fosters correct implementation and is a key precondition for achieving the overall objectives of cohesion policy and as such needs to be reinforced at all stages of implementation; believes that disclosure of the list of beneficiaries should be continued, notably online, as it is an efficient tool to improve transparency; takes the view that setting Community guidelines and introducing strategic reporting as a new instrument have contributed to increased accountability in delivering policy objectives; calls in this context for regular political debate in order to improve transparency, accountability and assessment of the effects of cohesion policy;

Implementation

4. Notes that the reported financial volume of projects selected is EUR 93,4 billion, representing 27,1 % of available EU resources in the current period, and that this average rate applies to the three cohesion policy objectives as well as to the Lisbon earmarking categories and to the progress in implementing the Community Strategic Guidelines; underlines, however, that progress varies widely between countries and across themes, with aggregate selection rates above 40 % in the case of 9 Member States and below 20 % for 4 Member States;

5. Reiterates its appreciation of the national efforts resulting in average allocation of expenditure for the achievement of the Lisbon agenda of 65 % of the available funds in the convergence regions and 82 % in the regional competitiveness and employment regions, exceeding the levels originally requested; notes with satisfaction that a total of EUR 63 billion is reported as allocated to Lisbon earmarking projects and that project selection under Lisbon earmarking is at the same level or slightly faster than selection for other actions, and therefore urges the Member States to continue in future to earmark resources for projects supporting the EU 2020 Strategy;

6. Notes that the progress rate among CSG themes is highest in the Territorial Dimension theme (30 %), above average for 'Improving knowledge and innovation for growth', but below 27,1 % in the case of the other two guidelines and that, moreover, selection rates are above average for Lisbon earmarked projects in both Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment objectives, but amount only to 20,5 % in the European Territorial Cooperation objective; regrets that, in the absence of output and result indicators for all Member States, the analysis of policy performance as presented in the strategic report has proved to have serious limitations; calls on the Commission, therefore, to review its administrative reporting requirements and calls on the Member States to be more disciplined about providing data on programme implementation;

7. Welcomes the progress already made in implementing projects relevant to the 'More and better jobs' Guideline, in view of the economic crisis and the growing number of unemployed; strongly recommends, however, that the Commission introduce methods for cooperating with the Member States that will make it easier for all necessary funding to be promptly mobilised and allocated efficiently for the achievement of a resource-efficient and competitive economy, inclusive growth and a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion and poverty reduction, which are priority targets of the EU 2020 Strategy and its objectives, in particular in the field of employment and social affairs, in order to boost growth and productivity and improve employment performance in Europe;

8. Welcomes the fact that the ESF has provided relevant support to implement labour market reforms and proved to be an effective instrument contributing to the shift from passive to active and even preventive labour market policies; calls on the Member States to continue with structural reforms that will safeguard labour markets against a potential future crisis;

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9. Calls on the Member States to make progress in the implementation of co-financed measures and activities aiming at regional level to support labour markets by reducing gender segregation as well as inequalities, such as the pay gap and under-representation in decision-making positions, by facilitating the reconciliation of working and family life and by encouraging conversion of precarious work into work with rights, given the significant proportion of women affected by precarious working arrangements;
10. Stresses the importance of improving infrastructure and services for disadvantaged microregions with a high concentration of socially marginalised people (e.g. the Roma), and also making them affordable;
11. Stresses the importance of transport in general in ensuring territorial, economic and social cohesion; is concerned that investment in the rail sector is not progressing according to plan and is below the level of progress in the road sector, thus not contributing sufficiently to the decarbonisation of transport; underlines in this context that disproportionately planned transport investments between the different modes are detrimental to the creation of intermodal European transport system and notes that further delays in implementation could accentuate imbalances;
12. Recalls that about 23,7 % (EUR 82 billion) of the Cohesion and Structural Funds allocation for 2007-2013 is intended for transport, but only half of it will be spent on TEN-T projects (EUR 17 billion on the TEN-T priority network and EUR 27,2 billion for the comprehensive part), with the other half being earmarked for investment in national, regional and local projects not indicated on the TEN-T maps; stresses that cohesion and structural funding allocated to transport is distributed between transport modes and networks in a way which takes insufficient account of the objectives of the European Union;
13. In terms of territorial cooperation, draws attention to the tendency to delay the launching of cross-border projects and railway projects in general and stresses the European added value of the TEN-T network, which is particularly evident in cross-border sections of projects and in their interconnection with national road, rail and inland waterways projects; proposes in this context systematising the introduction of common platforms for best practices organised on a socio-economic, geographic, demographic and cultural basis;
14. Welcomes the inclusion of expenditure for investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy in housing construction and housing projects for marginalised communities, which is successfully being implemented in many regions and should be continued in the future;
15. Calls for more effective implementation of programmes in the environmental sector, especially in cross-cutting areas which provide European added value, such as action to combat, mitigate and adapt to climate change, investment in cleaner and low-carbon technologies, action to combat air and water pollution, action for biodiversity protection, the expansion of railway networks, the promotion of energy efficiency, especially in the building sector, and renewable energy sources endeavouring to achieve the EU 2020 targets and promote the creation of green jobs and a green economy;
16. Calls for the relevant funds to be used for environmental disaster prevention and/or rapid reaction and calls on the Member States to speed up investment in prevention and in the rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land, given the low rate of implementation;

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17. Regrets the delays in project selection for strategic areas such as the rail sector, certain energy and environmental investments, the digital economy, social inclusion, governance and capacity building, and calls for a thorough analysis of the causes of these delays, while also inviting the Member States to involve their regions in closer monitoring of areas where efforts need reinforcement; highlights on the other hand the higher absorption rate of environmental projects in European Territorial Cooperation programmes, and points to the clear added value of cooperation in this context; underlines, however, that Member States may have caught up in areas where implementation was lagging behind, and that therefore delays at this particular stage need not be indicative of overall quality in the programming period; points in this context to the acceleration in absorption capacities and budgetary implementation of cohesion policy during 2010 which stems, inter alia, from recent legislative changes and from operational programmes reaching cruising speed, the last Management and Control Systems having finally been approved by the Commission;

18. Believes that corrective measures need to be promptly taken to improve poor performance in some priority areas; recommends carrying out an in-depth analysis of the implementation problems in areas with specific delays in project selection and calls on Member States in this context to step up efforts to improve project selection in the delayed themes, and to accelerate implementation of all selected projects to avoid the risk of not reaching the agreed objectives;

19. Considers that in some cases rapid project selection and implementation and an overall better use of the allocated funds is particularly needed for the activities aimed at improving human capital, promoting health and fostering disease prevention, ensuring equal opportunities, supporting labour markets and enhancing social inclusion, especially in order to overcome the negative impacts of the economic crisis;

20. Highlights the fact that several Member States confirmed that the discipline imposed by the earmarking exercise has improved the quality and focus of programming; notes, moreover, that Member States unanimously considered that maintaining fundamental priorities of their National Strategic Reference Frameworks and Operational Programmes linked to the Lisbon Strategy is the best instrument to tackle the crisis, and reconfirmed the relevance of the medium- and long-term objectives set out in these documents;

Challenges in implementation

21. Underlines the fact that effective selection and implementation of projects in some areas is hampered by missing relevant preconditions such as simpler application procedures at national level, clear national priorities for certain areas of intervention, timely transposition of EU laws and consolidated institutional and administrative capacity, and by excessive national red tape; calls therefore on Member States and regions to facilitate policy implementation by tackling these challenges and in particular by adapting the legal framework in the field of state aid, public procurement and environmental rules and pursue institutional reforms;

22. Recalls with regret that the substantial delay in policy implementation results mainly from the following factors: late conclusion of the negotiations on the multiannual financial framework and the legislative package of the policy, resulting in belated completion of the national strategies and operational programmes, changes in the rules on financial control and evaluation criteria imposed at national level, overlap with the closure of the period 2000-2006 and scarce public resources available for cofinancing in Member States;

23. Deplores the fact that, although the Strategic Report should highlight the contribution of the programmes cofinanced by the Structural Funds towards implementing the objectives of cohesion policy, it does not provide comprehensive data on the situation regarding regional disparities up to 2009;

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Response to the economic crisis

24. Welcomes the publication of the Commission Staff Working Paper 'Cohesion Policy: Responding to the economic crisis', a review of the implementation of cohesion policy measures adopted in support of the European Economic Recovery Plan; highlights that this review draws primarily on the information provided in national strategic reports; calls for the Commission to take the necessary measures in order to ensure that the information provided by the Member States is accurate;

25. Notes that, in the context of the global financial and economic crisis and the current economic slowdown, the EU cohesion policy decisively contributes to the European Economic Recovery Plan, constituting the largest Community source of investment in the real economy, and has proven to allow a flexible and appropriate response to the rapidly deteriorating socioeconomic environment; underlines that Member States appreciated that the crisis measures could be tailored to their specific needs; calls nonetheless for greater flexibility and reduced complexity in the rules to combat crisis and encourages Member States to use promptly all measures made available by the Commission to ensure an appropriate and timely reaction according to specific needs as well as a successful exit from the crisis to achieve long-term sustainable development by strengthening competitiveness, employment and the attractiveness of European Regions;

26. Stresses the importance of making supplementary efforts to overcome the difficulty of measuring the overall impact of specific cohesion policy-related measures under the EERP, and regrets that the review therefore can only give limited insights into concrete examples at national level; nevertheless welcomes the analysis of good practices and first conclusions presented in the report;

27. Considers that the signs of recovery from the crisis are fragile, and that in the coming years Europe has to tackle its structural weaknesses, including through Cohesion Policy interventions and targeted investments notably in research and development, innovation, education and technologies that are beneficial for all sectors in acquiring competitiveness; stresses therefore the need for a thorough analysis of the impact of measures aimed at counteracting the crisis and the necessity to provide for accessible structural funding, which is a powerful mechanism designed to help the regions in their economic and social restructuring and in promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity;

Creating synergies and avoiding the sectoral dispersion of regional policy resources

28. Shares the view of the Council expressed in the Council Conclusions on the Strategic Report 2010 on the real added value generated by one strategic and integrated approach for the structural funds; recalls that each fund needs its own rules for successful interventions on the ground in specific situations; stresses, as well, the need in the post-crisis era to consolidate public budgets and increase synergies and the impact of all available funding sources (EU, national, EIB instruments) through effective coordination;

29. Stresses that synergies between structural funds and other sectoral policy instruments, and between these instruments and national, regional and local resources, are vital and create valuable links allowing mutual reinforcement, sustainable implementation of programmes and achievement of territorial cohesion; acknowledges that, through the earmarking provisions for 2007-2013, cohesion policy is better geared to create synergies with research and innovation policies; underlines that Structural Funds could be used to enhance research infrastructure, ensuring the level of excellence necessary for access to research funds; also highlights the benefits of synergies between ERDF, ESF and EAFRD; notes that experience clearly proves that successful performance of ESF-financed programmes is essential in order to maximise the effectiveness of

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ERDF funding for economic actions; recalls in this context the potential of cross-financing which is not yet fully exploited; with a view to the next Strategic Report, invites the Commission to introduce a reference to mutual interaction between Structural Funds as well as their interaction with other EU financial instruments;

Monitoring and evaluation

30. Underlines that technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation stimulate policy learning and, together with an efficient financial control will constitute an incentive to improve the quality of performance;

31. Regrets that only 19 Member States reported on core indicators and therefore at this stage it is impossible to have a first clear EU-wide picture of the impact of the policy on the ground; strongly encourages Member States to use core indicators in the next round of the strategic reporting exercise in 2012-2013; calls on the Commission to step in and provide support for Member States and regions to produce timely, coherent and complete data;

32. Underlines the need for the Commission to ensure efficient and constant monitoring and control systems in order to improve governance and effectiveness of the delivery system of the Structural Funds; calls on the Commission to enhance the coherence and quality of monitoring of the progress made by Member States by making obligatory the use of a minimum set of core indicators in national strategic reports in the next programming period to facilitate comparison and result-orientation, by providing more detailed guidance;

Good practices

33. Considers that good practices and mutual learning in policy implementation must be highlighted and their exchange promoted, alongside reinforcement of administrative capacities, in particular of local and regional authorities, in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness and avoid repetition of past mistakes;

34. Encourages good practices related to national reporting such as using core indicators, reporting on results and outputs, reporting on synergies between national policies and EU policies, organising public debates and consultations with stakeholders, submitting the reports to national parliaments for opinions and publishing the reports on governmental websites (with all reports using clear and concise terminology), as these practices improve the quality of the reporting exercise and increase the ownership of stakeholders within Member States; insists on the need to follow best practice in regions characterised by a lower degree of absorption or efficiency in respect of funding programmes;

35. Welcomes the fact that the Commission sets out how national, regional and local authorities can realign operational programmes to EU 2020 sustainable growth objectives, and how practices can be refocused towards smart growth objectives during this programming period; calls on Member States to act without delay, invest more in sustainable development and smart growth, social inclusion and gender equality in the labour market and use funds more effectively; calls furthermore on the Commission to launch a debate to elaborate further on how cohesion policy can, over the current period 2007-2013, contribute to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy;

Conclusions and recommendations

36. Underlines the role of SMEs as innovative players in the economy and stresses the need to develop this sector inter alia through the implementation of the Small Business Act, facilitate SMEs' access to financing and operating capital and encourage SMEs to become involved in innovative projects with a view to strengthening their competitiveness and potential for greater employment; stresses that many social and economic benefits are to be gained from cooperation at the local and regional levels between the public authorities, SMEs, business networks, research institutes and clusters, as well as from the effective use of all existing resources, including the financial engineering instruments (Jeremie) as elements of capital reinforcement for SMEs; nevertheless underlines that, regarding loan financing, legal certainty needs to

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be improved in such a way that financial intermediaries and promotional banks can set up conditions for innovative financial instruments that will remain valid for the whole programming period;

37. Strongly believes that good governance at European, national, regional and local level and effective cooperation between the various levels of government are fundamental to ensuring the quality of the decision-making process, strategic planning, improved absorption capacity of Structural and Cohesion Funds and therefore the successful and efficient implementation of cohesion policy; encourages the Commission and the Member States to strengthen and mobilise multi-level governance in accordance with the Treaty and the subsidiarity and partnership principles; stresses therefore the importance of a genuine partnership strategy, both vertically and horizontally, and recommends that the quality of partnership involvement be assessed, recalling that partnership may lead to simplification, particularly in the project selection procedure; calls on Member States to involve the sub-national levels from the outset in defining the investment priorities and in the decision-making process itself, as well as to integrate them with civil society actors and community representatives in the implementation of programmes; proposes, in this context, the establishment of a Territorial Pact of Local and Regional Authorities on the Europe 2020 Strategy in every Member State;

38. Believes that simplification of provisions and procedures should contribute to the speedy allocation of funds and payments, and that it should therefore continue and should result in improved rules in the post-2013 period, both at EU and national level without creating major difficulties for the beneficiaries; considers that regional policy should be better adapted to the needs of users and that simplification should reduce unnecessary administrative barriers and costs as well as other obstacles hampering policy goals, should avoid confusion and erroneous interpretation of current administrative practices and should, on the other hand, ensure more flexible project management, synchronised controls, and increased efficiency of the policy; deplors that, due to superfluous bureaucracy, overcomplicated rules subject to frequent changes and a lack of harmonised procedures, many funds remain unused; considers that a balance needs to be struck between simplification and the stability of rules and procedures;

39. Calls for the Member States and regional authorities to enhance capacity-building and reduce the administrative burden, in particular to ensure the cofinancing of projects by national contributions and, when relevant, to introduce financial engineering support, in order to increase the absorption of the funds and to avoid further major delays in investing;

40. Supports the ideas put forward by the Commission aimed at placing greater emphasis on result-based implementation of Structural Funds and considers that strategic reporting, as a valuable tool of monitoring progress in implementation, creates a basis for peer review and strategic debate at EU level; with a view to achieving better quality strategic reporting, based on comparative and reliable data, encourages Member States to adopt a more analytical and strategic approach while elaborating national reports with stronger focus on objectives, results and strategic developments and to submit timely, accurate information on the core indicators and the agreed targets; stresses therefore that the Strategic report 2013 should be result-oriented and focused more on qualitative analysis of the effectiveness of programmes, outputs, outcomes and early impacts rather than on excessive presentation of statistical data;

41. Calls on the Commission and Member States to use the opportunity of the mid-term review of the financial perspective 2007-2013 and of cohesion policy to ensure increased absorption of European funding in the period 2011-2013;

42. Calls on all EU institutions and Member States, with a view to the next round of negotiations on the future cohesion policy, to facilitate speedier conclusion of key documents, such as the multiannual financial framework and regulations, in the next round of negotiations with a view to overcoming the start-up difficulties that might arise at the beginning of the next programming period;

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43. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the future cohesion policy will benefit from adequate financial resources; takes the view that it must not be seen as merely an instrument for achieving the objectives of sectoral policies, since it is a Community policy offering substantial added value and has its own *raison d'être*: economic, social and territorial cohesion; underlines therefore that cohesion policy should remain independent and its current foundations and principles should not be modified by a sectoral dispersion;

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44. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.

European urban agenda and its future in the cohesion policy

P7_TA(2011)0284

European Parliament resolution of 23 June 2011 on European Urban Agenda and its Future in Cohesion Policy (2010/2158(INI))

(2012/C 390 E/02)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Title XVIII thereof,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/702/EC of 6 October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines on cohesion ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 397/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1233/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 December 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 663/2009 establishing a programme to aid economic recovery by granting Community financial assistance to projects in the field of energy ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 February 2008 on the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for Spatial Development and Territorial Cohesion ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 21 October 2008 on governance and partnership at national and regional levels and a basis for projects in the sphere of regional policy ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 291, 21.10.2006, p. 11.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 126, 21.5.2009, p. 3.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 346, 30.12.2010, p. 5.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 184 E, 6.8.2009, p. 95.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 15 E, 21.1.2010, p. 10.