

III

(Preparatory acts)

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

98TH PLENARY SESSION, 29-30 NOVEMBER 2012

Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on 'A Common Strategic Framework'

(2013/C 17/11)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- reiterates its conviction that there is a need for a Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for the years 2014–2020 in order to establish coordination and synergy between the activities of the five CSF funds and to outline a clear strategic direction for partnership contracts and operational programme;
- expresses doubts about the proposed division of the CSF between an annex to the general regulation and a delegated act with indicative actions of high European added value and priorities for cooperation. Supports the adoption of the CSF as an annex to the general regulation only;
- considers that the indicative actions of high European added value should be adopted by the European Commission in the form of a non-binding communication, as was done with the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007–2013;
- stresses that the aim of the CSF must be to create the conditions for a fluid transition between the legislative package and the partnership contract and the operational programmes, and points to the need to spell out the details of the implementation mechanisms;
- regrets that the 11 thematic objectives listed in the proposal for the general regulation are different from the six priorities of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the six separate priorities of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which makes coordination unusually difficult;
- is convinced of the need to decentralise operational management at local and regional level in order to increase coordination and complementarity between funds, which will ensure an effective integrated approach, i.e. a multi-thematic, bottom-up method, tailored to the specific features of each region;
- strongly recommends the implementation of operational programmes based on many funds;
- calls for a stable programming framework to ensure coherence with the multiannual perspective of cohesion policy;
- questions the possibility of amending the CSF by way of a delegated act.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Rapporteur-general | Marek WOŹNIAK (PL/EPP), Marshal of Wielkopolska region |
| Reference document | Amended proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006. COM(2012) 496 final, Annex I |

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

General comments

1. reiterates its conviction that there is a need for a Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for the years 2014–2020 for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) in order to establish coordination and synergy between the activities of the CSF funds and to outline a clear strategic direction for partnership contracts and operational programmes;
2. recalls the political recommendations the CoR has elaborated in its opinion on the general regulation and underlines that, considering that the CSF is to be adopted as an annex to the general regulation, it is the latter which provides strategic vision and targets whilst the CSF should be considered as the main implementation tool;
3. expresses doubts about the proposed division of the CSF between an annex to the general regulation ⁽¹⁾ and a delegated act with indicative actions of high European added value and priorities for cooperation. Supports the adoption of the CSF as an annex to the general regulation only. Points out that delegated acts should be limited to non-essential elements of basic legal acts, whereas all issues relating to the CSF are of fundamental importance for local and regional authorities and are strategic in nature. The Committee of the Regions' opinion does not cover delegated acts and yet the CSF is a mandatory area of consultation for the CoR, in accordance with Article 177 TFEU;
4. considers that the CSF should be adopted by the Council and the European Parliament and that it should only be revised in the event of any fundamental changes in the EU's socio-economic situation. In this connection, questions the possibility of amending Annex I by way of a delegated act;
5. considers that the indicative actions of high European added value should be adopted by the European Commission in the form of a non-binding communication, as was done with the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 (COM(2005) 299 final);
6. points out that the CSF funds have a pivotal role to play in supporting instruments for implementing the Europe 2020 strategy and investments to reduce differences in development between Member States and regions, and within individual regions. At the same time, calls for the Treaty obligations to be used as a guiding principle;
7. welcomes the fact that the CSF proposals will implement the underlying principles of Article 11 of the proposal for a general regulation, in accordance with which the CSF is intended to respond to the key territorial challenges. Also points out that the CSF must contain clear references to the outermost regions and areas with particular territorial features, such as upland areas, peripheral areas, industrial areas in transition, islands, areas with a widely dispersed population and sparsely populated areas, which require special forms of intervention;
8. welcomes the reference to the need to involve regional and local partners as a condition for the achievement of political objectives. Believes that this will facilitate the application of the bottom-up territorial approach;

⁽¹⁾ COM(2012) 496 final.

9. calls for the CSF, in accordance with the principle of proportionality, to effectively play its role of clarifying and refining the logic of fund intervention in the future programming period, while leaving room for adapting programme intervention to the specific situation, needs and potential of individual Member States and regions. The CSF should provide indicative frameworks for partnership contracts and operational programmes prepared in individual Member States, thus giving the Member States and the competent regional and local authorities the opportunity to respond independently to development challenges, particularly having regard to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Stresses that the aim of the CSF must be to create the conditions for a fluid transition between the legislative package and the partnership contract and the operational programmes;

10. points to the need to spell out the details of the implementation mechanisms;

11. regrets that the 11 thematic objectives listed in the proposal for the general regulation are different from the six priorities of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the six separate priorities of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, which makes coordination unusually difficult;

Introduction to the CSF annex

12. regrets that the CSF lacks elements on the key principles to be implemented;

Coherence and consistency with EU economic governance

13. calls for a stable programming framework to ensure coherence with the multiannual perspective of cohesion policy;

14. considers that, from the start, the main activity should be to identify appropriate programme priorities for the whole period 2014-2020, e.g. when preparing partnership contracts and operational programmes. In this context, has some concerns that taking into account the country-specific recommendations and national reform programmes could run counter to concerted multiannual programming at the regional level;

15. refers to the CoR opinion on the general regulation, which rejects the proposals aiming to establish a link between

cohesion policy and compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact⁽²⁾, but proposes the option of amending partnership contracts and operational programmes on the basis of recommendations arising from the European semester;

16. nonetheless draws attention to the fact that frequent re-programming will make fund management less predictable, and should therefore be done only when strictly necessary;

Coordination mechanisms among the CSF funds

17. stresses the need for improved coordination among the CSF funds, which will improve the effectiveness of their intervention and create the necessary synergies in the context of a difficult budgetary situation and limited financial resources. This will make it possible to ensure a higher level of synergy and complementarity in EU investment;

18. calls for complementarity to be a central focus of the CSF. It is therefore necessary to strive to establish an integrated multi-thematic approach, linking mutually complementary indicative actions from different funds aimed at achieving the same objective. Regrets, however, that the Commission has not gone further in spelling out the potential complementarity between various thematic priorities, the investment priorities of several CSF funds as well as between indicative actions and investment priorities. In this connection, stresses that the draft CSF document must ensure complementarity between the fields of activity of the individual funds and eliminate the danger of duplication;

19. is convinced of the need to decentralise operational management at local and regional level in order to increase coordination and complementarity between funds, which will ensure an effective integrated approach, i.e. a multi-thematic, bottom-up method, tailored to the specific features of each region;

20. strongly recommends the implementation of operational programmes based on many funds, maximising the positive impact of EU intervention in the regions through the integrated use of the opportunities created by various regional development instruments and the genuine realisation by local and regional authorities of their socio-economic development strategies;

⁽²⁾ i.e. the suspension of payments and commitments under operational programmes in the event of failure to comply with EU economic governance recommendations.

21. welcomes the fact that the European Commission places heavy emphasis on the need for the programming of integrated territorial development. Welcomes the references to 'Integrated Territorial Investments' (ITI), 'Integrated Operations' (IO) and 'Joint Action Plans' (JAP); regrets, however, that neither these instruments nor the concept of 'Integrated Operations' are defined in the general regulation or the CSF annex. Stresses the need for a precise definition of IOs as an instrument to be used for integrated financing with other EU policy areas and instruments;

22. in particular, in relation to the urban development strategy in accordance with Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation, notes the importance and innovative nature of allocating resources to integrated actions for the sustainable urban development of towns, to be implemented in the form of 'integrated territorial investments' (ITI), and regrets that the regulatory framework does not state with sufficient clarity that, in this case, responsibility for the management and implementation of 'integrated territorial investments' (ITI) falls directly to local authorities;

23. considers that the local nature of community-led local development should be retained;

24. in line with the CoR opinion on community-led local development, draws attention to the holistic nature of local development, which focuses on the challenges and potential of all types of region, including urban, rural and peri-urban regions as well as functional areas. Therefore, calls for action to enable community-led local development to be used for the implementation of all 11 thematic objectives under the strategic framework, according to local needs;

Coordination between the CSF Funds and other EU policy areas and instruments

25. supports the reference to the need for coordination with other EU policies and instruments outside the scope of the CSF. This will enable a closer link between the Europe 2020 strategy and EU cohesion and sectoral policies at European, national and local levels. Considers in particular that this will make it possible to streamline the management and increase the effectiveness of the programmes implemented;

26. calls for a more precise definition of the coordination mechanisms and the drawing-up of guidelines for EU policy areas and instruments connected with the CSF, especially at EU level. Notes that, as most of these instruments are centrally managed, the joint responsibility of the European Commission should be highlighted alongside the role of the Member States;

27. welcomes the introduction of a list of EU policy areas and instruments/programmes included in the draft appendix (which includes Horizon 2020, NER, COSME, LIFE, Erasmus for All, the Programme for Social Change and Innovation (PSCI), the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Development Fund (EDF));

28. welcomes the emphasis placed on the link between the CSF funds and the Horizon 2020 programme. Considers that the European Commission has expanded the guidelines, proposing that the CSF funds support smart specialisation strategies in relation to Horizon 2020 based on two very different kinds of activity - capacity building and exploitation and immediate dissemination of the results of research and innovation;

29. welcomes the recommendation that the CSF funds be able to co-finance partnerships between the education, business and research sectors, and that these activities be coordinated with international partnerships between businesses and educational institutions in the form of knowledge alliances or sectoral skills alliances, which may be supported by the Erasmus for All programme;

30. supports the introduction of a new possibility for using CSF funds to complement the Connecting Europe Facility, e.g. via second or third-level links with the EU's infrastructure priorities;

31. refers to the CoR opinion on the LIFE programme and shares the European Commission's view that the programme plays a decisive role in mobilising significantly more ERDF, ESF and CF resources for environmental purposes. The Committee of the Regions supports the LIFE integrated projects which are presented as projects of a new, higher category;

32. stresses the need to increase coordination among the ENI, IPA and EDF external instruments, especially in the case of regions which share borders with countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean and in the case of the outermost regions of the EU which share borders with ACP countries;

Coordination with cooperation activities

33. notes that, as explained by the Committee of the Region's opinion on the draft general regulation, there is no reason for the provisions of partnership contracts to include European Territorial Cooperation. Therefore rejects the inclusion of the 'Priorities for Cooperation' section in the delegated act;

34. welcomes, however, the shortened 'Coordination with Cooperation Activities' section of the CSF annex;

35. points out that it would be worthwhile broadening trans-national territorial cooperation under the ESF to include inter-regional and cross-border cooperation;

36. welcomes the fact that the macroregional dimension has been taken into account and underlines the importance given within the territorial cooperation instrument to achieving the objectives of macroregional strategies;

Horizontal principles and cross-cutting policy objectives

37. welcomes the fact that the Common Strategic Framework includes the principles of multilevel governance and partnership under its horizontal principles, in accordance with Article 5 of the proposal for a general regulation;

38. calls for the practical application of the principle of multilevel governance by stressing the importance of adopting a bottom-up approach in the decision-making process and in the preparation of partnership contracts and operational programmes;

39. strongly supports activities to promote equality between men and women. Believes, however, that identifying new bodies exclusively devoted to this purpose within the system of fund implementation is not effective. It would be more appropriate to apply procedural solutions enabling this principle to be

achieved effectively within the framework of existing institutional structures;

40. refers to the CoR's earlier opinions on the ERDF and the ESF, which highlight the lack of interest in the question of demographic change. Accordingly, especially welcomes the inclusion of the issue of demographic change as one of the proposed cross-cutting policy objectives;

Arrangements to address territorial challenges

41. welcomes the fact that the CSF highlights the need for the forms of intervention to be adapted to local challenges and opportunities, but expects to see more detailed analysis and further work in this area, the results of which can serve as indicators for local and regional authorities;

42. welcomes the proposal for partnership contracts to translate the elements set out in the CSF into their national context. Stresses the need to take account of downstream local government units, which requires the involvement of relevant local and regional authorities;

43. notes the difficulty in elaborating a harmonised definition of territories in the CSF funds and offers its support in advancing on that issue. Stresses that the definition changes in line with sectoral legislation, which makes it more difficult to identify the main territorial challenges.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, point 3.2

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|---|
| Member States and managing authorities responsible for the implementation of the CSF Funds shall work closely together in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Partnership Contract and programmes. | Member States, <u>their local and regional authorities, partners</u> and managing authorities responsible for the implementation of the CSF funds shall work closely together in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Partnership Contract and programmes. |

Reason

Self-explanatory.

Amendment 2

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, point 3.3

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|--|
| <p>(...) 2. Member States shall promote the development of local and sub-regional approaches, in particular via community-led local development by delegating decision-making and implementation to a local partnership of public, private and civil society actors. Community-led local development shall be implemented in the context of a strategic approach to ensure that the 'bottom-up' definition of local needs takes account of priorities set at a higher level. Member States shall therefore define the approach to community-led local development across the CSF Funds and shall indicate in the Partnership Contracts the main challenges to be tackled in this way, the main objectives and priorities for community-led local development, the types of territories to be covered, which specific role will be attributed to local action groups in the delivery of strategies and the role envisaged for the different CSF Funds in implementing local development strategies in different types of territories such as rural, urban and coastal areas and the corresponding co-ordination mechanisms.</p> | <p>(...) 2. <u>Community-led local development shall be implemented in the context of a strategic approach to ensure that the 'bottom-up' definition of local needs takes account of priorities set at a higher level.</u> Member States shall promote the development of local and sub-regional approaches, in particular via community-led local development by delegating decision-making and implementation to a local partnership of public, private and civil society actors. Community-led local development shall be implemented in the context of a strategic approach to ensure that the 'bottom-up' definition of local needs takes account of priorities set at a higher level. Member States shall therefore define the approach to community-led local development across the CSF Funds and shall indicate in the Partnership Contracts the main challenges to be tackled in this way, the main objectives and priorities for community-led local development, the types of territories to be covered, which specific role will be attributed to local action groups in the delivery of strategies and the role envisaged for the different CSF Funds in implementing local development strategies in different types of territories such as rural, urban and coastal areas and the corresponding co-ordination mechanisms.</p> <p>3. <u>An Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) is an instrument which provides for integrated delivery arrangements for investments under more than one priority axis of one or more operational programmes. Funding from several priority axes and programmes can be bundled into an integrated investment strategy for a certain territory or functional area. This can take the form of an integrated strategy for urban development, but also for inter-municipal cooperation in rural territories. It allows the managing authorities to delegate the implementation of parts of different priority axes to a local authority to ensure that investments are undertaken in a complementary manner. Within an ITI certain components can be implemented through community-led local development, combining the two approaches.</u></p> <p>4. <u>An Integrated Operation (IO) is a project, contract, action or group of projects that receives support from one or more CSF Funds and from other Union instruments. This is subject to the condition that an expenditure item is not funded twice under the CSF Funds or other Union instrument.</u></p> |

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---------------------------------|--|
| | <p><u>5. A Joint Action Plan (JAP) is an operation implemented through a result based approach in order to achieve specific objectives jointly agreed between the Member State and the Commission. It may be part of one or several operational programmes and thus may constitute a useful instrument to foster better integration of the different CSF Funds towards a common objective.</u></p> <p><u>6. A Joint Operational Programme (JOP) is an operational programme combining support from several CSF Funds</u></p> <p><u>7. Member States shall promote the development of community-led local development, integrated territorial investments, integrated operations, joint action plans and joint operational programmes by indicating in the Partnership Contracts the main challenges to be tackled in this way, the main objectives and priorities for these instruments, the types of territories to be covered, which specific role will be attributed to local action groups in the delivery of local development strategies and the role envisaged for the different CSF Funds in implementing integrated strategies in different types of territories such as rural, urban and coastal areas, and the corresponding coordination mechanisms.</u></p> |

Reason

See point 21 of the opinion.

Amendment 3

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, Add new point after 3.3.2

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---------------------------------|---|
| | <p><u>3. Where an 'integrated territorial investment', in accordance with Article 99 of the proposal for a general regulation on the structural funds, concerns a sustainable urban development strategy, in accordance with Article 7 of the proposal for an ERDF regulation, the management and implementation of that integrated investment shall be the direct responsibility of beneficiary local authorities.</u></p> |

Reason

The text incorporates, in the form of a legislative provision, the contents of point 22 of the opinion, aimed at highlighting the innovation of delegating the management and implementation of ITIs to towns, as provided for in Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation and in Article 99 of the general regulation.

Amendment 4COM(2012) 496 *final*

Annex 1, point 4.4

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|---|
| Member States shall ensure, where appropriate, that financing from the CSF Funds is coordinated with support from the NER 300 Programme (...) | Member States <u>and the Commission</u> shall ensure, where appropriate, that financing from the CSF Funds is coordinated with support from the NER 300 Programme (...) |

Reason

See point 26 of the opinion.

Amendment 5COM(2012) 496 *final*

Annex 1, point 4.5

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Member States shall, where possible, seek to exploit synergies with Union policy instruments (both funding and non-funding instruments) serving climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection and resource efficiency.</p> <p>2. Member States shall, where appropriate, ensure complementarity and coordination with LIFE, in particular with Integrated Projects in the areas of nature, water, waste, air, climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation.</p> | <p>1. Member States <u>and the Commission</u> shall, where possible, seek to exploit synergies with Union policy instruments (both funding and non-funding instruments) serving climate change mitigation and adaptation, environmental protection and resource efficiency.</p> <p>2. Member States <u>and the Commission</u> shall, where appropriate, ensure complementarity and coordination with LIFE, in particular with Integrated Projects in the areas of nature, water, waste, air, climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation.</p> |

Reason

See point 26 of the opinion.

Amendment 6COM(2012) 496 *final*

Annex 1, point 4.6.1

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|--|
| Member States shall seek to use CSF Funds to mainstream tools and methods developed and tested successfully under 'Erasmus for All'. | Member States <u>and the Commission</u> shall seek to use CSF Funds to mainstream tools and methods developed and tested successfully under 'Erasmus for All'. |

Reason

See point 26 of the opinion.

Amendment 7

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, point 4.9.2

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|--|
| <p>2. To support deeper territorial integration, Member States shall seek to capitalise on synergies between territorial cooperation activities under cohesion policy and the European Neighbourhood Instruments, in particular with regard to cross border cooperation activities. Member States shall also, where appropriate, ensure that existing activities are associated with newly created European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, having special regard to coordination and exchange of best practices.</p> | <p>2. To support deeper territorial integration, Member States shall seek to capitalise on synergies between territorial cooperation activities under cohesion policy and the European Neighbourhood Instruments, <u>Instrument for Pre-Accession and European Development Fund</u>, in particular with regard to cross border cooperation activities. Member States shall also, where appropriate, ensure that existing activities are associated with newly created European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, having special regard to coordination and exchange of best practices.</p> |

Reason

See point 32 of the opinion.

Amendment 8

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, point 6.3.2

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|--|---|
| <p>Member States shall ensure the participation of the relevant bodies responsible for promoting gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in the partnership, and ensure adequate structures in accordance with national practices to advise on gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in order to provide the necessary expertise in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the CSF Funds. The composition of the monitoring committees shall be gender balanced and include a gender expertise/responsibility function.</p> | <p>Member States shall ensure <u>within the framework of existing national structures</u> the participation of the relevant bodies responsible for promoting gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in the partnership, and ensure adequate structures in accordance with national practices to advise on gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility in order to provide the necessary expertise in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the CSF Funds. The composition of the monitoring committees shall be gender balanced and include a gender expertise/responsibility function.</p> |

Reason

See point 39 of the opinion.

Amendment 9

COM(2012) 496 final

Annex 1, point 7

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|---|
| <p>7.1. Member States and regions shall undertake the following steps for the purpose of preparation of their Partnership Contracts and programmes:</p> | <p>7.1. Member States and regions shall undertake the following steps for the purpose of preparation of their Partnership Contracts and programmes:</p> |

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|--|
| (a) An analysis of the Member State's or region's development potential and capacity, particularly in relation to the key challenges identified in Europe 2020, the National Reform Programmes and the relevant country-specific recommendations. The responsible authorities shall undertake a detailed analysis of national, regional and local characteristics; | (a) An analysis of the Member State's or region's development potential and capacity, particularly in relation to the key challenges identified in <u>the Commission's reports on cohesion policy</u> , Europe 2020, the National Reform Programmes and the relevant country-specific recommendations. The responsible authorities shall undertake a detailed analysis of national, regional and local characteristics; |
| (b) An assessment of the major challenges to be addressed by the region or Member State, the identification of the bottlenecks and missing links, innovation gaps, including the lack of planning and implementation capacity that inhibit the long-term potential for growth and jobs. This shall form the basis for the identification of the possible fields and activities for policy prioritisation, intervention and concentration; | (b) An assessment of the major challenges to be addressed by the region or Member State, the identification of the bottlenecks and missing links, innovation gaps, including the lack of planning and implementation capacity that inhibit the long-term potential for growth and jobs. This shall form the basis for the identification of the possible fields and activities for policy prioritisation, intervention and concentration; |
| (c) An assessment of the cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional or cross-border coordination challenges, particularly in the context of macro-regional and seabasin strategies; | (c) <u>An assessment of the territorial specificities to be taken into account:</u> — <u>the role of cities, rural areas fisheries and coastal areas, areas facing specific geographical or demographic problems;</u> — <u>the specific challenges of the areas affected by industrial transition, the outermost regions, the northernmost regions with a very low population density and of island, cross-border or mountain regions;</u> — <u>urban-rural linkages, in terms of access to affordable, quality infrastructures and services, and problems in regions with a high concentration of socially marginalised communities;</u> |
| (d) Identification of steps to achieve improved coordination across different territorial levels and sources of funding to deliver an integrated approach linking Europe 2020 with regional and local actors. | (d e) An assessment of the cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional or cross-border coordination challenges, particularly in the context of macro-regional and seabasin strategies; |
| 7.2. In order to take into account the objective of territorial cohesion, the Member States and regions shall ensure that the overall approach to promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: | (d e) Identification of steps to achieve improved coordination across different territorial levels and sources of funding to deliver an integrated approach linking Europe 2020 with regional and local actors. |
| (a) reflects the role of cities, rural areas fisheries and coastal areas, areas facing specific geographical or demographic problems; | 7.2. In order to take into account the objective of territorial cohesion, the Member States and regions shall ensure that the overall approach to promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: |
| (a) reflects the role of cities, rural areas fisheries and coastal areas, areas facing specific geographical or demographic problems; | (a) reflects the role of cities, rural areas fisheries and coastal areas, areas facing specific geographical or demographic problems; |

| Text proposed by the Commission | CoR amendment |
|---|--|
| (b) takes account of the specific challenges of the outermost regions, the northernmost regions with a very low population density and of island, crossborder or mountain regions; | (b) takes account of the specific challenges of the outermost regions, the northernmost regions with a very low population density and of island, crossborder or mountain regions; |
| (c) addresses urban-rural linkages, in terms of access to affordable, quality infrastructures and services, and problems in regions with a high concentration of socially marginalised communities. | (c) addresses urban-rural linkages, in terms of access to affordable, quality infrastructures and services, and problems in regions with a high concentration of socially marginalised communities. |

Reason

The Committee welcomes the reference to Treaty's obligations with regard to the territorial cohesion objective in point 7.2 but suggests the inclusion of this parameter in the steps mentioned in point 7.1.

Brussels, 29 November 2012.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO