

Thursday 4 February 2016

P8\_TA(2016)0050

## **The role of local and regional authorities in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)**

**European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the role of local and regional authorities in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) (2015/3013(RSP))**

(2018/C 035/15)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 174-178 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
  - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 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 and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 <sup>(1)</sup> (hereinafter the ‘Common Provisions Regulation’ (CPR)),
  - having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 <sup>(2)</sup>,
  - having regard to the Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 9 July 2015 — Outcome of the negotiations on the partnership agreements and operational programmes,
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 14 December 2015 on Investing in jobs and growth — maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds (COM(2015)0639),
  - having regard to the Committee of the Regions’ White Paper on Multilevel Governance,
  - having regard to the question to the Commission on the role of local and regional authorities in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) (O-000012/2016 — B8-0105/2016),
  - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas EU cohesion policy in the 2014-2020 programming period continues to represent the main investment instrument covering all regions of the EU, and is an opportunity to create a more bottom-up process of sustainable growth, supporting job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation at the level of local and regional economies, improving the quality of citizens’ lives and creating solidarity and enhanced development in the regions of the EU;
- B. whereas cohesion policy is also, as defined in the TFEU, intended to narrow the economic, social and territorial disparities between EU Member States and their regions, through an inclusive strategy;
- C. whereas for the first time (for the 2014-2020 period), a coherent framework, the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR), was created, setting common rules for all five European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds): 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);

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289.

Thursday 4 February 2016

- D. whereas the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) introduced under the CPR is contributing to maximising the impact and efficiency of public spending and is allowing synergies to take place, by combining ESI Funds with other EU-funded programmes;
- E. whereas Article 7 of the European Regional Development Fund Regulation states that a minimum of 5 % of the ERDF's resources should be allocated to supporting sustainable urban development through integrated actions where cities, sub-regional and local bodies responsible for implementing sustainable urban strategies should be responsible for tasks relating, at least, to the selection of operations;
- F. whereas in the current programming period 2014-2020, Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Local Actions Groups are also eligible for financing under the ERDF and the ESF;
- G. whereas the partnership and multilevel governance principles, as set out in Article 5 of the CPR, are among the core principles of the ESI Funds;
1. Underlines the key role of local and regional authorities in shaping and implementing EU strategies, while recognising the role of a wide range of stakeholders from Member States to community groups; believes, furthermore, that the proximity of these authorities to citizens and the diversity of governance at local and regional level is an asset to the EU;
  2. Is in favour of synergies and complementarity between the ESI Funds and other EU programmes, in which local and regional authorities can play a useful role in attaining the objectives of cohesion policy; stresses, however, that any reprogramming of ESI Funds should be done in accordance with CPR rules and that new initiatives should not weaken the core of the ESI Funds;
  3. Points to the reinforced partnership principle and the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, which set out the legal involvement of local and regional authorities and provide for minimum requirements for their involvement in all phases of the preparation and implementation of operational programmes; recognises that, although local and regional authorities were consulted in most cases during the negotiations on the partnership agreements and operational programmes, their involvement did not amount to full partnership; urges the Member States, therefore, to fully comply with these requirements and increase efforts to address deficiencies;
  4. Stresses that enhancing the administrative capacity and tackling the structural weaknesses of local and regional authorities are pivotal to both the programming and the implementation phases of the operational programmes and to achieving a higher absorption rate of ESI funds; calls, therefore, on the Commission to ensure that support is provided for capacity building for local and regional authorities and their administrations and institutions, so that they are in a position to play a meaningful role in cohesion policy, especially in the event of sub-delegation of implementation tasks to lower levels of administration, in particular urban authorities;
  5. Notes that EU cohesion policy is a good example of multilevel governance with a bottom-up approach, where the local and regional authorities — in dealing with European Structural and Investment Funds — strike a balance between the Union's goal of greater economic, social and territorial cohesion and the territorial impact of EU policies;
  6. Highlights the importance of the Community-Led Local Development initiative, in which local authorities are partners; underlines that it should remain a bottom-up approach while establishing objectives for interventions related to local and regional needs;
  7. Considers that the new Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) initiatives represent step changes in the ability of local stakeholders to combine funding streams and plan well-targeted local initiatives;
  8. Believes that multilevel governance supports the fundamental political objectives of the EU, such as economic growth, social progress and sustainable development, and that it reinforces the democratic dimension of the EU and increases the efficiency of its political action;

**Thursday 4 February 2016**

9. Draws attention to challenges faced by local and regional authorities, such as globalisation, climate change, energy security, migration flows and increased urbanisation, taking into account that every region has its specific needs and characteristics;
  10. Is convinced that urban areas play an increasing role in today's world, and that EU policies have an important role in setting the right framework within which European urban areas can unlock their potential for growth;
  11. Calls on the Commission to closely monitor and report back to Parliament on the implementation of Article 7 of the ERDF Regulation;
  12. Believes that the EU Urban Agenda can improve the development and implementation of policies and programmes, thus ensuring a more coherent impact on, and support for, cities, while contributing towards achieving common European and national objectives, in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality; underlines the importance of the Pact of Amsterdam and of the progress towards the objectives it strives to achieve; notes, however, that efforts to remove bottlenecks and inconsistencies should be applied to EU policies impacting on urban and rural areas alike;
  13. Calls on the Commission to continue to build upon previous and ongoing initiatives, including public consultations, in order to identify measures to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities in the management and implementation of the ESI Funds through the partnership agreements and operational programmes;
  14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Committee of the Regions, and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.
-