











Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2016/2326(INI)	Procedure completed
Building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy		
Subject 4.70.02 Cohesion policy, Cohesion Fund (CF)		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 WESTPHAL Kerstin	09/11/2016
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 HETMAN Krzysztof	
		 TOMAŠIĆ Ruža	
		 VAN MILTENBURG Matthijs	
		 REINTKE Terry	
		 D'AMATO Rosa	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Budgets	 OLBRYCHT Jan	24/11/2016

Key events			
19/01/2017	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/05/2017	Vote in committee		
24/05/2017	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0202/2017	Summary
12/06/2017	Debate in Parliament		
13/06/2017	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/06/2017	Decision by Parliament	T8-0254/2017	Summary
13/06/2017	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	

Procedure reference	2016/2326(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	REGI/8/08792

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE599.838	23/02/2017	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE602.804	04/04/2017	EP	
Committee opinion	BUDG	PE600.934	26/04/2017	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0202/2017	24/05/2017	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0254/2017	13/06/2017	EP	Summary

Building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Kerstin WESTPHAL (S&D, DE) on building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy.

Members recalled that cohesion policy at European level was very effective and that it remained - in its economic, social and territorial dimension - a necessary policy which combines the specific needs of a territory with EU priorities and delivers tangible results on the ground for all citizens. They called on the Commission to present a comprehensive legislative proposal for a strong and effective cohesion policy post-2020 and considered it essential that cohesion policy should have an adequate budget.

The increasing constraints on both the EU and the national budgets and the consequences of Brexit should not lead to EU cohesion policy being weakened.

Added value of EU cohesion policy: the report stressed the importance of shared management, which is based on the partnership principle, multilevel governance and the coordination of different administrative levels, in order to achieve regional, economic and social convergence. It called for optimal coordination and cooperation between the Commission DG responsible for cohesion policy and other DGs, as well as with national, regional and local authorities.

Members stressed the importance of:

- addressing the shortcomings of the financial planning and implementation system leading to the accumulation of unpaid bills and the build-up of an unprecedented backlog that rolled over from the last MFF to the current one;
- the early involvement of all stakeholders, including from civil society, with a view to ensuring increased accountability and visibility in the implementation of cohesion policy without increasing administrative burdens or causing delays;
- strengthening measures to reduce regional disparities and prevent the emergence of new disparities in all types of regions;
- continuing to seek cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation as part of the aim to strengthen territorial cohesion and to extend funding opportunities to the next post-2020 Interreg Europe programme.

Architecture: Members underlined that the current categorisation of regions, the reforms introduced, such as thematic concentration, and the performance framework have demonstrated the value of cohesion policy. The value of ex-ante conditionalities, in particular the one on Research and Innovation Strategies for smart specialisation has also been highlighted.

Members highlighted the need for:

- greater flexibility in the implementation of the EU budget in order to respond to unforeseen events and to adapt ESIF investments to the changing needs of each region;
- a balanced link between cohesion policy and economic governance process in the framework of the European Semester; greater consideration of the territorial dimension would be beneficial for the European Semester;
- strengthened national and regional agencies for supporting investments to improve administrative and institutional capacity in the programming, implementation and evaluation of operational programmes;
- the simplification of the cohesion policy overall management system at all levels of governance by facilitating the programming, management and evaluation of operational programmes: improvements are possible in terms of multiple layers of audit, as well as the number of controls, in order to achieve greater harmonisation between cohesion policy, competition policy and other Union policies, in particular state aid rules;
- financial instruments to be with caution: grants should be complemented only where such financial instruments demonstrate an added value and could have a leverage effect by attracting additional financial support;
- synergies and communication between ESI Funds and other Union funds and programmes, including EFSI, to be strengthened and

- that multi-fund operations are implemented;
- the development of a set of indicators (taking into account the Social Progress Index or a demographic indicator) that complement the GDP indicator.

Key policy areas for a modernised cohesion policy after 2020: Members are of the view that combating unemployment remains a priority and that cohesion policy should continue to care for the vulnerable and marginalised, address growing inequalities and build solidarity through co-investments in education, training and culture.

Other important areas are the fight against climate change and the effects of demographic change, innovation, SMEs in job creation, as well as sustainable urban development and urban innovative actions.

Members stressed the importance of partnerships between rural and urban areas.

In addition, the increased visibility of the cohesion policy is vital to fight against euroscepticism.

Members called for the Commission's preparation of the new legislative framework to start in due time so that the post-2020 cohesion policy may be implemented at the start of the new programming period.

Building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy

The European Parliament adopted by 350 votes to 149, with 171 abstentions, a resolution on building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy.

Members recalled that cohesion policy at European level was very effective and that it remained - in its economic, social and territorial dimension - a necessary policy which combines the specific needs of a territory with EU priorities and delivers tangible results on the ground for all citizens. They called on the Commission to present a comprehensive legislative proposal for a strong and effective cohesion policy post-2020 and considered it essential that cohesion policy should have an adequate budget.

The increasing constraints on both the EU and the national budgets and the consequences of Brexit should not lead to EU cohesion policy being weakened.

Added value of EU cohesion policy: Parliament stressed the importance of shared management, which is based on the partnership principle, multilevel governance and the coordination of different administrative levels, in order to achieve regional, economic and social convergence. Regretting the late adoption of several operational programmes during the current programming period, it welcomed the first signs of the accelerated implementation of the operational programmes observed during 2016 and urged the Commission to continue as such.

Members stressed the importance of:

- proposing practical ways and measures of avoiding such problems at the outset of the next programming period;
- addressing the shortcomings of the financial planning and implementation system leading to the accumulation of unpaid bills and the build-up of an unprecedented backlog that rolled over from the last MFF to the current one;
- the early involvement of all stakeholders, including from civil society, with a view to ensuring increased accountability and visibility in the implementation of cohesion policy;
- strengthening measures to reduce regional disparities and prevent the emergence of new disparities in all types of regions;
- continuing to seek cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation as part of the aim to strengthen territorial cohesion and to extend funding opportunities to the next post-2020 Interreg Europe programme.

Architecture: Parliament underlined that the current categorisation of regions, the reforms introduced, such as thematic concentration, and the performance framework have demonstrated the value of cohesion policy. The value of ex-ante conditionalities, in particular the one on Research and Innovation Strategies for smart specialisation has also been highlighted.

Members highlighted the need for:

- greater flexibility in the implementation of the EU budget in order to respond to unforeseen events and to adapt ESIF investments to the changing needs of each region; the creation of a reserve is an interesting option in this context;
- address the impact of investments on the budget deficits of the Member State governments;
- a balanced link between cohesion policy and economic governance process in the framework of the European Semester; greater consideration of the territorial dimension would be beneficial for the European Semester;
- strengthened national and regional agencies for supporting investments to improve administrative and institutional capacity in the programming, implementation and evaluation of operational programmes;
- the simplification of the cohesion policy's overall management system at all levels of governance by facilitating the programming, management and evaluation of operational programmes: improvements are possible in terms of multiple layers of audit, as well as the number of controls, in order to achieve greater harmonisation between cohesion policy, competition policy and other Union policies, in particular state aid rules;
- financial instruments to be with caution: grants should be complemented only where such financial instruments demonstrate an added value and could have a leverage effect by attracting additional financial support;
- synergies and communication between ESI Funds and other Union funds and programmes, including EFSI, to be strengthened and that multi-fund operations are implemented;
- the development of a set of indicators (taking into account the Social Progress Index or a demographic indicator) that complement the GDP indicator.

Parliament opposed macro-economic conditionalities and highlighted that the link between cohesion policy and economic governance processes in the European Semester must be balanced, reciprocal and non-punitive towards all the interested parties.

Key policy areas for a modernised cohesion policy after 2020: Parliament is of the view that combating unemployment remains a priority and that cohesion policy should continue to care for the vulnerable and marginalised, address growing inequalities and build solidarity through co-investments in education, training and culture.

Other important areas are: (i) the fight against climate change and the effects of demographic change; (ii) innovation, SMEs in job creation; (iii) sustainable urban development and urban innovative actions; (iv) the digital agenda, including the provision of the necessary infrastructure and advanced technological solutions.

The resolution stressed the importance of partnerships between rural and urban areas. It welcomed the Pact of Amsterdam and the better recognition accorded to the role of cities and urban areas in European policy-making. In addition, the increased visibility of the cohesion policy is vital to fight against euroscepticism.

Lastly, Members called for the Commissions preparation of the new legislative framework to start in due time so that the post-2020 cohesion policy may be implemented at the start of the new programming period.