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Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2017/2279(INI)	Procedure completed
Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: 7th report of the European Commission		
Subject 4 Economic, social and territorial cohesion		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Regional Development	 JOULAUD Marc	10/10/2017
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 BRESSO Mercedes	
		 TOMAŠIĆ Ruža	
		 VAN MILTENBURG Matthijs	
	 D'AMATO Rosa		
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Budgets		
	 Employment and Social Affairs		11/01/2018
		 ULVSKOG Marita	
	 Culture and Education		05/12/2017
		 DIACONU Mircea	
European Commission	Commission DG Regional and Urban Policy	Commissioner CREU Corina	

Key events			
18/01/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/03/2018	Vote in committee		

06/04/2018	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0138/2018	Summary
16/04/2018	Debate in Parliament		
17/04/2018	Results of vote in Parliament		
17/04/2018	Decision by Parliament	T8-0105/2018	Summary
17/04/2018	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2017/2279(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/8/11512

Documentation gateway

Document attached to the procedure		COM(2017)0583	09/10/2017	EC	
Committee draft report		PE616.856	31/01/2018	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE618.191	28/02/2018	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE616.606	20/03/2018	EP	
Committee opinion	BUDG	PE616.664	21/03/2018	EP	
Committee opinion	EMPL	PE617.994	22/03/2018	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0138/2018	06/04/2018	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0105/2018	17/04/2018	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2018)401	30/08/2018	EC	

Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: 7th report of the European Commission

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Marc JOULAUD (EPP, FR) on strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: the 7th report of the European Commission.

The 7th Cohesion Report shows that regional disparities are narrowing again, but that the picture is highly uneven, whether measured by GDP per head, employment or other indicators, and that certain disparities persist, or are shifting or growing, between and within regions and Member States, including inside the euro area. It also contains worrying information about unemployment rates, including youth unemployment rates, which in many regions have not reverted to the levels seen before the crisis, and about competitiveness, poverty and social inclusion.

The added value of cohesion policy: Members considered it crucial that cohesion policy in the new programming period should continue to adequately cover all European regions and remain the European Union's main public investment instrument based on long-term strategy and perspectives, with a budget commensurate with existing and new challenges, and ensuring the fulfilment of the basic goals of the policy. Cohesion policy provides European added value by contributing to European public goods and priorities (such as growth, social inclusion, innovation and environmental protection), as well as to public and private investment, and that it is a fundamental tool for achieving the Treaty objective of combating disparities with a view to the upward adaptation of living standards and reducing the backwardness of the least favoured regions.

Members stressed that the added value of this policy stems primarily from its ability to take into account national development needs along with the needs and specificities of different regions and territories, and to bring the Union closer to its citizens.

The middle-income regions: the report noted that the middle-income regions have not grown at the same rate as either the low-income regions (which still need to catch up with the rest of the EU) and the regions with very high income, as they face the challenge referred to as the middle-income trap, because of their excessively high costs in comparison with the former and excessively weak innovation systems in comparison with the latter. Members are convinced that a major challenge for future cohesion policy will be to provide appropriate support to the middle-income regions.

Fields of action: Member stressed that employment (including youth unemployment), social inclusion, fighting poverty, supporting innovation, digitalisation, support for SMEs and start-ups, climate change, the circular economy and infrastructure should constitute priority areas for cohesion policy in future. They also noted that a specific post-2020 financing mechanism must be created under Article 349 TFEU to integrate migrants in the outermost regions, which have to cope with greater migratory pressure owing to their specific characteristics, and thus contribute to their sustainable development.

A simplified cohesion policy: the Commission is called on to take account of the recommendations of the High Level Group on Simplification in its future legislative proposals. Members stressed the need to provide a framework which guarantees legal stability through simple, clear and predictable rules, particularly as regards management and auditing, in order to ensure a proper balance between performance and simplification objectives. Members called for a reduction in the volume of legislation and guidelines.

Challenges and prospects: Members are extremely concerned at the scenarios recently presented by the Commission, concerning the cuts to the cohesion policy budget that might be made under the next MFF and which would exclude many regions from the scope of cohesion policy. They wish to see an ambitious budget commensurate with the challenges facing the regions. They considered that cohesion policy can help to meet new challenges, such as security or the integration of refugees under international protection. However, the report stressed that cohesion policy cannot be the solution to all crises, and opposes the use of cohesion policy funds to cover short-term financing needs outside the policy's scope.

Lastly, Members noted that some European regions are particularly exposed to the impact of Brexit. They stressed that the future cohesion policy must minimise the negative impact of Brexit on other European regions, and called for detailed consideration to be given to the possibility of continuing partnerships in the context of territorial cooperation.

Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: 7th report of the European Commission

The European Parliament adopted by 506 votes to 71, with 45 abstentions, a resolution on strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union: the 7th report of the European Commission.

The 7th Cohesion Report shows that regional disparities are narrowing again, but that the picture is highly uneven, whether measured by GDP per head, employment or other indicators, and that certain disparities persist, or are shifting or growing, between and within regions and Member States, including inside the euro area. It also contains worrying information about unemployment rates, including youth unemployment rates, which in many regions have not reverted to the levels seen before the crisis, and about competitiveness, poverty and social inclusion.

Added value of cohesion policy: Parliament stressed that cohesion policy provides European added value by contributing to European public goods and priorities (such as growth, social inclusion, innovation and environmental protection), as well as to public and private investment, and that it is a fundamental tool for achieving the Treaty objective of combating disparities with a view to the upward adaptation of living standards and reducing the backwardness of the least favoured regions. European added value is strongly reflected in European territorial cooperation (ETC).

Members considered it crucial that cohesion policy in the new programming period should continue to adequately cover all European regions and remain the European Union's main public investment instrument based on long-term strategy and perspectives.

A concentration of cohesion policy exclusively on the least developed regions would hinder progress on the political priorities of the Union as a whole. They reiterated their commitment to shared management and the partnership principle, which should be preserved and strengthened for the post-2020 period, as well as to multi-level governance.

Territorial dimension: Parliament stressed the importance of supporting rural territories by encouraging investment in projects that support the local economy and accompany these regions in the difficulties they face, such as rural desertification, social inclusion, lack of professional opportunities, the destruction of town centres or areas without healthcare. It called for certain territorial characteristics, such as those of island, mountain, rural, border, northern, coastal or peripheral regions, to be better taken into account when defining investment priorities.

The introduction of integrated strategies for sustainable urban development would also merit further development and replication in other sub-regional territories.

The middle-income regions: Members noted that the middle-income regions have not grown at the same rate as either the low-income regions (which still need to catch up with the rest of the EU) and the regions with very high income, as they face the challenge referred to as the middle-income trap, because of their excessively high costs in comparison with the former and excessively weak innovation systems in comparison with the latter.

Members are convinced that a major challenge for future cohesion policy will be to provide appropriate support to the middle-income regions.

Fields of action: Parliament stressed that employment (including youth unemployment), social inclusion, fighting poverty, supporting innovation, digitalisation, support for SMEs and start-ups, climate change, the circular economy and infrastructure should constitute priority areas for cohesion policy in future. It also noted that a specific post-2020 financing mechanism must be created under Article 349 TFEU to integrate migrants in the outermost regions, which have to cope with greater migratory pressure owing to their specific characteristics, and thus contribute to their sustainable development.

A simplified cohesion policy: Parliament stressed the need to provide a framework which guarantees legal stability through simple, clear and predictable rules, particularly as regards management and auditing, in order to ensure a proper balance between performance and

simplification objectives. It suggested a simplified procedure for the targeted modification of operational programmes during programming (e.g. in the case of natural disasters).

Challenges and prospects: Members are extremely concerned at the scenarios recently presented by the Commission, concerning the cuts to the cohesion policy budget that might be made under the next MFF and which would exclude many regions from the scope of cohesion policy. They wish to see an ambitious budget commensurate with the challenges facing the regions. They considered that cohesion policy can help to meet new challenges, such as security or the integration of refugees under international protection. However, Parliament stressed that cohesion policy cannot be the solution to all crises, and opposes the use of cohesion policy funds to cover short-term financing needs outside the policy's scope. It also called for every effort to be made to avoid delays in programming for the next period in order to prevent late payments.

Some European regions are particularly exposed to the impact of Brexit. Parliament stressed that the future cohesion policy must minimise the negative impact of Brexit on other European regions, and called for detailed consideration to be given to the possibility of continuing partnerships in the context of territorial cooperation.