



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Council conclusions on the Strategic Report of 2010 by the Commission on the Implementation of the Cohesion Policy Programmes**

*3023rd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting  
Luxembourg, 14 June 2010*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING that promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States is one of the objectives of the European Union, as referred to in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union,

RECALLING 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,<sup>1</sup> and in particular Article 30(3) of that Regulation inviting the Council to examine the strategic report as soon as possible after its publication,

NOTING that cohesion policy - even though its implementation was hindered by the changing economic circumstances - has proved to be a relevant instrument to respond flexibly and efficiently to the socio-economic challenges resulting from the financial crisis, while maintaining a focus on medium and long-term objectives, and has the potential to contribute to post-crisis socio-economic prospects,

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

# **P R E S S**

RECALLING the conclusions of the European Council of 25 and 26 March 2010, according to which all common policies, including the cohesion policy, will need to support the Europe 2020 Strategy, and that it is important to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, also by developing infrastructure, in order to contribute to the success of that new strategy<sup>2</sup>,

NOTING the demonstrated achievements of the cohesion policy across Europe and the added value it can bring to the Europe 2020 Strategy, also through ensuring ownership of common European objectives at all governance levels and through proposing tailored and integrated solutions for each territory,

WELCOMES the Strategic Report by the Commission and the conclusions and recommendations referred to therein<sup>3</sup>, encouraging a more result-oriented policy, stressing the relevance and soundness of the agreed strategies, also in the context of the economic and financial crisis;

NOTES WITH SATISFACTION that projects representing 27% of the total financial amount dedicated to the cohesion policy for the 2007-2013 period are already selected, after approximately 18 months of active implementation, thanks to a real acceleration since the last quarter of 2009, and that this average rate of project selection is closely respected in the three current objectives – Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment, and European territorial cooperation – which cover all European regions;

NOTES that according to the Strategic Report, around 230 billion EUR of a total of 347 billion EUR were earmarked for the approved operational programmes for investment in operations consistent with the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 Strategy and WELCOMES that these priorities are being selected at a similar or slightly faster pace than other actions;

NOTES that an improved concentration of the cohesion policy resources can ensure a meaningful contribution of this policy to fostering competitiveness, innovation and employment in the EU;

NOTES nevertheless some delays in selecting projects in important fields, such as the rail sector, certain energy and environmental investments, digital economy, social inclusion, or governance and capacity building, and INVITES accordingly the concerned Member States to work further on improvements relating to project selection in these particular fields;

WELCOMES the efforts by the Member States to deliver their national strategic reports presenting both relevant qualitative and quantifiable elements on the implementation of cohesion policy programmes;

WELCOMES this Strategic Report as a significant achievement that should facilitate the future assessment of the effectiveness of cohesion policy in delivering European strategic objectives and NOTES that this Strategic Report provides an opportunity to discuss in the Council the results and achievements of cohesion policy, the contribution it is able to bring to other European objectives and the impact of other policies on economic, social and territorial cohesion;

---

<sup>2</sup> Doc. EUCO 7/1/10 CO EUR 4 CONCL 1.

<sup>3</sup> Doc. 8321/10 FSTR 23 FC 7 REGIO 30 SOC 250 FIN 129 CADREFIN 27 + ADD1.

STRESSES that evaluation of successive programming periods is necessary to increase policy learning in order to optimise the policy's impact, and therefore INVITES the Member States to continue their efforts related to evaluation and reporting, in particular to generate more evidence on the impacts of cohesion policy;

STRESSES the need to further improve the co-ordination of cohesion policy and other EU and national policies, where necessary, in order to increase the effectiveness in delivering common objectives in a more coordinated way;

UNDERLINES that cohesion policy has proved its value in its own right and needs to have an important role within the Europe 2020 Strategy, as this policy fosters structural change across Europe and supports key investment priorities;

RECALLS the valuable experience gained during the earmarking exercise and the need to concentrate operations in regions on a limited number of priorities to ensure they have a tangible impact, while Member States and regions should be given enough flexibility to determine the policy mix most appropriate to their specific needs and assets, and INVITES the Member States and the Commission to work towards improvement of the current mechanisms of concentration;

INVITES the Commission to explore all possibilities for a better co-ordinated and further simplified cohesion policy, with the aim of streamlining the programming, management and control procedures and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, taking into account the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity, in line with sound financial management, in order to allow prompt and effective use of the EU budget;

ENCOURAGES all actions oriented towards better quality strategic reporting on implementation of cohesion policy programmes including the use and reporting of a limited number of common core indicators, starting at a program level, to facilitate comparison and inform future national and EU-level reports;

ENCOURAGES the Commission to continue exploring the possibilities in the field of financial engineering with the aim of increasing leverage effect and impact of cohesion policy and achieving the best results possible from the selected projects;

INSISTS on the real added value generated by one strategic approach and by common implementation rules for the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund, within the general framework of the cohesion policy;

INVITES all stakeholders to continue discussions with regard to economic, social and territorial cohesion, especially with regard to simplification and with the aim of securing the necessary public financial resources at national, regional or local level in addition to the available EU budgetary resources, and to ensure effective management systems to be employed;

LOOKS FORWARD to the Commission's communications to be published in 2010 on the contribution of the cohesion policy to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the coming proposals of the Commission in the context of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report;

Without prejudice to the future financial framework, the COUNCIL:

- STRESSES the need for continuous EU-wide debate on political and strategic issues relating to the cohesion policy in order to have a common interpretation on its strategic aims and delivery principles, RECALLING that, while being concentrated on the least prosperous regions, cohesion policy should continue to foster competitiveness, innovation, employment and economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union;
- RECALLS experiences from the applied transitional regimes and NOTES that possible discussion should consider existing transitional regimes, *inter alia* in order to seek similar treatment of regions in similar situations, which also allow programmes to be organised effectively;
- RECALLS that cohesion policy, through its territorial cooperation programmes as well as through its multi-layer governance system under shared management, fosters cross-border and transnational integration and exchange of good practices;

CALLS on the Commission to ensure that its proposals for the new legislative provisions for the future of the policy are presented within a timetable that would allow for the effective start of the new programmes as from the 1 January 2014;

LOOKS FORWARD to the second phase of strategic reporting on implementation of the cohesion policy programmes under Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006, which will take place in 2012-2013."