



CEMR key points on European cohesion and territorial policy

Conseil des Communes
et Régions d'Europe
Council of European
Municipalities and Regions



European Cohesion and Territorial Policy

Context:

The EU cohesion policy aims to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the EU regions. It is based on the premises that without policy intervention regional inequalities will continue or even aggravate. Member States agree at European level on the financial and legal framework, and set common strategies and objectives, whereas the responsibility for setting and delivering results lies at national, regional and local level.

The policy is delivered in 7-year frameworks (2007-2013) and the debate on the future of the European cohesion policy after 2013 has started. The main objective of EU Cohesion policy should also in the future consist in reducing disparities between the regions. At its heart are principal questions such as:

- The concept: what areas, what selection criteria for the eligibility
- The aims: identifying the main challenges that should be targeted
- The management: good governance in practice, improving the administration of the programmes

The question of the financial framework is linked to the debate about the next financial framework of the EU (post 2013) and will be addressed at a later stage.

CEMR's key points on the future of the EU Cohesion Policy

1. The future EU cohesion policy has to be based on the principles of subsidiarity and territorial solidarity and aim to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion across the whole European Union with a special focus on the regions lagging behind.
2. It should contain the possibility of support to all local and regional authorities in principle, in order to foster development and territorial potential of all EU's territories.
3. The principal objectives of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas should continue to serve as guidelines; however, there should be enough flexibility to address new challenges.
4. CEMR strongly rejects any tendencies on a "re-nationalisation" of the cohesion policy to the member states.
5. It is necessary to add the territorial dimension to economic and social cohesion, which allows a horizontal and integrated approach since territorial cohesion is not a specific sectoral policy but looks at the territory concerned.
6. Therefore, the territorial impact of the relevant sectoral policies and their role in fostering economic, social and territorial cohesion needs to be taken into account.
7. What is even more needed is a better synchronization of the different sectoral policies with cohesion policy and should follow both Europe-wide strategic objectives and development strategies at regional and local levels.
8. Local and regional authorities by nature play a prominent role in regional and economic development and they are often implementing EU sectoral policies.
9. It should therefore be mandatory for central government and administration to involve regional and local governments in the preparation and implementation of policy and legislation that has an impact at their level at an early stage.

10. This is particularly important in relation to regional policy where the local and regional level should contribute to the planning, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.
11. In regional policy, local and regional authorities should have more responsibility and greater flexibility in determining the fields of action and the beneficiaries for financial support.
12. The cooperation of all levels (multilevel governance) and relevant sectors (integrated, multi-sectoral approach) is the basis for coherent and effective local and regional development and cohesion policy.
13. In particular, a better coordination between urban and rural areas should be achieved, taking into consideration developments such as increased urbanisation, urban sprawl and depopulation of rural areas.
14. Integrated urban development should be a pillar of the cohesion policy, which reflects the role of the cities, the tasks they deliver and services they provide to their citizens and the businesses.
15. Urban and rural areas are connected in multiple ways, economically, politically, socially and physically. Their inter-connectivity should not be counteracted by too strict differentiation of policy and funding mechanisms.
16. Rural development policy can help to improve the quality of life and diversification of the rural economy. However the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should strive for a balanced and integrated rural development and going beyond a purely sectoral agricultural policy. Moreover the strengthening of the wider rural economy should gain more and more in importance.
17. Therefore, the EU's rural development programme, the European Agricultural Funds for Regional Development, currently in the framework of the CAP, should be moved to cohesion policy.
18. There is a need for simplification of the structural funds and further consolidation of the wide range of sectoral programmes into fewer programmes that reflect EU policy priorities.
19. Earmarking and variable co-financing rules should be considered; especially introducing regional budgets with necessary leeway can serve local or regional authorities to solve their specific problems in the framework of an integrated regional development concept.
20. A wider set of indicators for the orientation and assessment of cohesion policy should be introduced, in particular a "governance indicator" to measure the involvement of local authorities in drawing up and implementing the Operational Programmes of the Structural Funds.

CEMR position papers on this item

(available on CEMR's website www.ccre.org):

- CEMR response to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (February 2009)
- CEMR response to the European Commission's consultation on the financial perspectives of the EU "Reforming the budget, changing Europe" (May 2008)
- CEMR response to the public consultation on the future of EU cohesion policy (February 2008)

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