Impact of cohesion policy on the integration of vulnerable communities and groups

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted an own initiative report by Gábor **HARANGOZO** (PES, HU) on the impact of cohesion policy on the integration of vulnerable communities and groups.

The report stresses that the territorial concentration of vulnerable communities and groups and the social exclusion affecting the most underdeveloped regions is an increasing challenge to cohesion in the EU. It notes, in this regard, that vulnerable groups may exist in all regions, even the more prosperous ones, and that an integrated approach should take such groups into account.

MEPs consider that the territorial dimension of social exclusion should be dealt with in the context of territorial cohesion policy. Member States are called upon to determine the criteria defining vulnerable communities and groups in order to better identify the problems they face and to facilitate targeted and systematic measures.

The parliamentary committee points out that impoverishment and exclusion are not unique to urban areas but also affect rural areas. It calls on the Commission and the Member States to allocate resources between developed cities and isolated territories, including rural areas, in a way that is adapted to their specific needs and to establish tailor-made long-term programmes for specific vulnerable communities and groups.

MEPs urge the Commission and the Member States to make greater use of the synergies and complementarities of the various financial instruments available, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Social Fund, the European Integration Fund, the programme of Community action on public health and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, in order to increase their added value.

Furthermore, the report emphasises the need to address the demographic trends of further urban concentration and rural exodus and their territorial impact; calls therefore on the Member States to draw up strategies to revitalise vulnerable areas by developing infrastructure, maintaining services of general interest, offering appropriate training and employment opportunities, improving housing and increasing the attractiveness of those areas to investors.

The Commission is called upon to:

- examine the extent to which new quantifiable development indicators in addition to GDP per capita, such as social indicators, should also be used in order to identify the most vulnerable communities and groups;
- present, in the framework of the forthcoming Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, an objective for and a clear definition of territorial cohesion, the criteria determining it, its instruments and the means available for achieving territorial targets;
- present a specific proposal addressing in a realistic and specific manner the problems faced by vulnerable communities and groups, including social exclusion.