

Contribution of the cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon objectives

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The Committee on Regional Development adopted the own-initiative report by Ricardo CORTÉS LASTRA (S&D, ES) on the contribution of the Cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon and the [EU2020 objectives](#).

The Cohesion policy and Lisbon Strategy: Members observe that in the programme allocations for 2007-2013 approximately EUR 228 billion over the 7-year period has been earmarked to the Lisbon priorities. They recall that already in the 2000-2006 period, despite the absence of an earmarking mechanism, the link between cohesion policy programmes and the Lisbon Strategy was strong with EUR 10.2 billion invested in research and innovation.

The committee takes the view that the original Lisbon Strategy, based solely on the open method of coordination, was structurally unable to obtain its stated goals and that it was only when it was linked to the Cohesion policy that true results were reached. It stresses that this error should be avoided in the proposed EU2020 strategy.

Members urge the Commission to come up with a proposal for evaluation indicators before 2012 in order to provide the means to measure the impact produced, also as regards quantity and quality, and to make the necessary adjustments for the next programming period.

The main statements made in this report are as follows:

- a **weak multi-level governance** was one of the main limits of the Lisbon Strategy, with the insufficient involvement of regional and local authorities and civil society in the design, implementation, communication and evaluation of the strategy. Members recommend their stronger integration in the future at all stages;
- when the **partnership principle** was applied in the Lisbon Strategy, it has increased the sense of ownership of the objectives by the local and regional authorities, as well as by the economic and social stakeholders, and ensured higher sustainability of the interventions. It calls on the Commission to monitor the implementation of the partnership principle in the Member States more effectively;
- the **weak synergies that existed between National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the National Reform Programmes** under the strategy. It recommends a stronger and regular dialogue at all levels, including the Community level, between administrations responsible for the cohesion policy and the Lisbon/EU2020 Strategies and the relevant partners from the monitoring committee;
- the financial engineering instruments, in particular JEREMIE and JESSICA should be strengthened to ensure better support to business and SMEs. Members recommend that the rules governing these instruments be simplified to allow their greater use by beneficiaries.

Cohesion policy and EU2020: Members consider that the EU2020 strategy must be an integral part in the achievement of the goal of territorial cohesion, included as a new objective in the Lisbon Treaty. However, according to the report, the proposed EU2020 strategy, similar to the Lisbon Strategy, does not sufficiently reflect the different development levels of regions and Member States and therefore does not put enough stress on economic cohesion in the enlarged EU.

Members welcome the recognition of the role of the Structural Funds in the delivery of the EU2020 goals. They stress, however, that the cohesion policy is not just the source of stable financial allocations but is also a **powerful instrument for the economic development** of all of Europe's regions. They emphasise that a strong and well-financed cohesion policy, embracing all European regions, must be a key element of the EU2020 Strategy. They reject all attempts to renationalise the cohesion policy and ask for the regional dimension to be fully supported in the review of the EU budget.

The report makes the following recommendations:

- whilst the cohesion policy's priorities should be aligned with the EU2020 objectives, **sufficient flexibility** should be allowed to accommodate regional specificities and support the weaker and neediest regions to overcome their socio-economic difficulties, natural handicaps and reduce disparities;
- the **governance system should be improved** compared to the Lisbon Strategy: the report recommends its design and implementation, while using Cohesion and structural funds, according to the multi-level governance principle so as to ensure the greater involvement of local and regional authorities and civil society stakeholders;
- the EU2020 strategy must be an integral part in the achievement of the **goal of territorial cohesion**, included as a new objective in the Lisbon Treaty. A stronger territorial dimension of the strategy, considering the specificities and different development levels of the European regions will lead to a greater sense of ownership of its goals at all levels and ensure a better awareness of objectives and outputs on the ground;
- considers it essential to ensure the **provision of joint statistics**, as well as reading capacity in respect of the indicators, at both local and regional level;
- the **key role of cities** in achieving the EU2020 goals. Members urge that their experience and contribution be taken into account in implementing the EU2020 priorities, especially as regards climate change, social integration, demographic change and investments in sustainable economic development, energy, transport, water management, health care, public safety etc;
- the Commission should present concrete proposals for **creating synergies between the cohesion policy and existing sectoral policies** according to an integrated approach;
- the Union should continue to use, as its main financing mechanisms, the Cohesion Fund and structural funds. Members consider it unnecessary to create new separate thematic funds to address the EU2020 goals and instead deem that they should be included in cohesion and rural development policies;
- the adoption of a **simplified approach** to the use of the Structural Funds in the future regulatory framework;
- the Commission is recommended to undertake an **annual review of the priorities** of the EU-2020 Strategy, on the basis of the results obtained in implementing this strategy;
- Members call on the Commission to present to the Parliament as soon as possible a structured working programme for the implementation of the Strategy. Moreover, they call for a clear working document setting out the relationship between the Strategy and the Cohesion policy.