European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): support to the Investment for growth and jobs goal, 2014-2020

2011/0275(COD) - 17/07/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading

The Committee on Regional Development adopted the report by Jan OLBRYCHT (EPP, PL) on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions concerning the European Regional Development Fund and the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006

The committee recommended that the position of Parliament adopted in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission proposal as follows:

Scope of support: Members extended the scope of support of ERDF to:

- **productive investment, irrespective of the size of the enterprise** (in research and innovation, information and communication technologies (ICT), and promoting a low carbon economy, if it involves cooperation between large enterprises and SMEs);
- investment in **infrastructure relating to research and innovation**;
- investment in the development of endogenous potential through fixed investment in equipment and **small-scale infrastructure and sustainable tourism infrastructure**, services to enterprises, support to research and innovation bodies and investment in technology and applied research in enterprises;
- **networking,** cooperation and exchange of experience between competent regional, local, urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners, and bodies representing civil society.

Furthermore, Members **deleted the part of the Commission proposal which banned the ERDF from supporting investments in infrastructure** providing basic services to citizens in the areas of environment, transport, and ICT in more developed regions.

Lastly, Members forbade **investment in airport infrastructure** unless the investment is related to environmental protection.

Under the **European Territorial Cooperation** goal, the ERDF may also support the sharing of human resources and facilities and all types of infrastructure across borders in all regions.

Thematic concentration: Members were in favour of **increased flexibility** in this regard. The most important amendment was the inclusion of an additional thematic objective in the obligatory ones and the introduction of a separate mechanism for the concentration for the category of **transition regions**.

Moreover, **new derogations were included** in the report, in particular concerning specific needs of regions designated with the phasing-out status in the 2007-2013 period and NUTS 2 level regions consisting solely of islands, as well as the derogation for the northern sparsely populated regions.

There was also a derogation for **productive investments in enterprises in the outermost regions**, irrespectively of their size.

Investment priorities: Members added several new elements to the list of priorities regarding investments:

- the addition of **“eco-innovation”** to the thematic objective on strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
- supporting the adoption of **emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy**; strengthening ICT applications for e-culture;
- supporting the **capacity of SMEs** to engage in growth in regional, national and international markets, and in innovation processes;
- promoting research in, innovation in and adoption of **low-carbon technologies** and the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand;
- investing in the **waste** sector and the **water** sector;
- revitalisation of **cities;**
- promoting **green growth**;
- developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable **railway system**, and promoting noise-reduction measures;
- promoting **social inclusion** through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services;
- support for physical, economic and social regeneration of **deprived communities in urban and rural areas.** The committee introduced a provision stating that a delegated act will amend the list of indicators in order to ensure effective assessment of progress in programme implementation.

Sustainable urban development: actions should be undertaken not only through Integrated Territorial Investments but also **through a specific operational programme, or a specific priority axis.**

Taking into account its specific territorial situation, each Member State must establish in its Partnership Agreement **the principles for the selection of urban areas** where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented.

At least 5% of the ERDF resources allocated at national level under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal will be allocated to integrated actions for sustainable urban development where **cities and urban authorities shall be responsible** for tasks relating at least to the selection of operations.

The Commission shall establish an **urban development network** to promote capacity-building, networking and exchange of experience at Union level between urban authorities responsible for implementing sustainable urban development strategies and innovative actions in the field of sustainable urban development.