Resolution on the role of local and regional authorities in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

2015/3013(RSP) - 04/02/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Regional Development on the role of local and regional authorities in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Recalling that the **partnership and multilevel governance principles**, as set out in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, are among the core principles of the five ESI Funds, Parliament stated that it was in favour of synergies and complementarity between the ESI Funds and other EU programmes, in which **local and regional authorities can play a useful role** in attaining the objectives of cohesion policy.

Although local and regional authorities were consulted in most cases during the negotiations on the partnership agreements and operational programmes, Members noted that **their involvement did not amount to full partnership**. They urged Member States, therefore, to fully comply with the requirements flowing from the reinforced partnership principle and European Code of Conduct on Partnership, and increase efforts to address deficiencies.

Parliament stressed that enhancing the **administrative capacity and tackling the structural weaknesses of local and regional authorities** are pivotal to both the programming and the implementation phases of the operational programmes and to achieving a higher absorption rate of ESI funds. The Commission was asked to ensure that **support is provided for capacity building** for local and regional authorities, especially in the event of sub-delegation of implementation tasks to lower levels of administration, in particular urban authorities.

In the current programming period 2014-2020, **Community-Led Local Development** (CLLD) and local actions groups are also eligible for financing under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Parliament highlighted the **importance of the Community-Led Local Development initiative**, in which local authorities are partners, and considered that the new Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and CLLD initiatives represent step changes in the ability of local stakeholders to combine funding streams and plan well-targeted local initiatives.

Convinced that urban areas play an increasing role in today’s world, Parliament felt that the **EU urban agenda** can improve the development and implementation of policies and programmes, thus ensuring a more coherent impact on, and support for, cities, while contributing towards achieving common European and national objectives. It noted, however, that efforts to remove bottlenecks and inconsistencies should be applied to EU policies impacting on urban and rural areas alike.

The Commission was asked to continue to build upon previous and ongoing initiatives, including public consultations, in order to identify measures to **strengthen the role of local and regional authorities** in the management and implementation of the ESI Funds through the partnership agreements and operational programmes.