

# Resolution on delayed implementation of ESI Funds operational programmes – impact on cohesion policy and the way forward

2016/3008(RSP) - 16/02/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled by the Committee on Regional Development on delayed implementation of ESI Funds operational programmes – impact on cohesion policy and the way forward.

Members recalled the late conclusion of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) negotiations and the late adoption of the ESI Funds regulations **resulted in delays** in the process of adoption and implementation of partnership agreements and operational programmes and project implementation at local, regional and national level.

Parliament expressed concerns that further delays in the implementation of cohesion policy operational programmes will impact negatively on the achievement of these goals, contributing moreover to a widening of the differences in regional development.

Drawing attention to the fact that the current pace of implementation risks leading to large amounts of decommitments in the following years, Members emphasised that necessary measures should be taken to avoid this and called on the Commission to **indicate the actions it envisages** in this regard.

Given that in many Member States the economic crisis has brought liquidity problems and resulted in governments having less money available for public investment, the Commission and the Member States to make full use of the flexibility available under the Stability and Growth Pact.

**Speeding up cohesion:** Parliament called on the Commission, in close cooperation with Member States and on the basis of an objective analysis of the factors contributing to current delays, to present a “**Cohesion acceleration plan**” in the first quarter of 2017 in order to facilitate an accelerated implementation of ESI Funds operational programmes. It underlined nevertheless in this context the need to ensure low error rates, the fight against fraud, and the strengthening of administrative capacity as a pre-condition to achieve timely and successful results.

It also called on the Commission to continue providing support through the Task Force for Better Implementation and to make available an action plan of its activities to Parliament.

Concerned by the delays in the designation of managing, certifying and auditing authorities, Parliament called on Member States to **complete the designation process**, and on the Commission to deploy the **technical assistance and advisory services** needed to facilitate and speed up the implementation of operational programmes on the ground.

**Preparation for the next programming period:** Parliament called on the Commission to consider and develop solutions, including additional forms of flexibility such as **flexibility among priorities and among operational programmes**, in keeping with the Europe 2020 strategy objectives. It called for efforts to be increased with a view to ensuring and facilitating synergies between the EU funding opportunities, such as ESI Funds, Horizon 2020 and EFSI.

Taking into consideration the decommitment rules, Members called on the Commission to **establish an adequate payment plan up to 2023**, proposing increased payment ceilings under Heading 1b, if necessary, until the end of the current programming period.

Lastly, the resolution urged the Commission to submit the legislative package concerning the next programming period by the beginning of 2018 at the latest, and to facilitate a smooth and timely negotiation of the post-2020 MFF. The UK referendum result and the upcoming Brexit arrangements should be duly taken into consideration.