Impact of EU cohesion policy on Northern Ireland

2017/2225(INI) - 11/09/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 565 votes to 51, with 65 abstentions, a resolution on the impact of EU cohesion policy on Northern Ireland.

The important role of cohesion policy: underlining the positive contribution of EU cohesion policy to Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of assisting the recovery of deprived areas and of building cross-community contacts in the context of the peace process, **Parliament welcomed the commitment to future funding in the Commission's draft multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027**.

It pointed out that in addition to the more general cohesion policy funds, Northern Ireland has benefited in particular from special cross-border and inter- and cross-community programmes, particularly the PEACE Programme (more than EUR 1.5 billion since 1995), which has decisively contributed to the peace process in Northern Ireland, supports the Good Friday Agreement and continues to support the reconciliation of communities. More than EUR 1 billion in EU financial assistance will be spent on economic and social development in Northern Ireland and the neighbouring regions in the **current financing period**, of which:

- EUR 230 million will be invested in the Northern Ireland PEACE Programme (with a total budget of almost EUR 270 million) and
- EUR 240 million in the Interreg V-A programme for Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland (with a total budget of EUR 280 million).

Post 2020: funding is considered "neutral" in Northern Ireland and Members expressed concern that the end of these programmes may endanger cross-border and inter- and cross-community trust-building activities and, as a consequence, the peace process.

Without prejudice to the negotiations between the Union and the United Kingdom, Parliament considered it essential that Northern Ireland be able to participate in **certain special Union programmes beyond 2020**, such as the PEACE programme and the Interreg V-A programme for Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland. It also requested, in the context of the post-2020 MFF, that all relevant financial instruments be implemented to enable the objectives of cohesion policy to be pursued.

Parliament noted the Commission's intention to propose the **continuation of the PEACE and Interreg programmes** in its proposal for the MFF 2021-2027. It also took note of the UK position paper on the future of Cohesion Policy of April 2018, in which the UK states its willingness to **explore a potential successor to PEACE IV, as well as Interreg V-A**, for the post-2020 period.

In addition, Members considered that it is essential that the people of Northern Ireland, and in particular young people, should continue to have access to economic, social and cultural exchanges across Europe, particularly to the **Erasmus+ programme**.

Lastly, Parliament stressed that good practices with cohesion funding and the PEACE Programme should be taken as the **EU model** and promoted in order to overcome mistrust among communities in conflict and to achieve lasting peace in other parts of Europe and even worldwide.