Cohesion policy in the EU’s eastern border regions: strengthening territorial resilience and cross-border cooperation

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The European Parliament adopted by 414 votes to 79, with 90 abstentions, a resolution on cohesion policy in the EU’s eastern border regions: strengthening territorial resilience and cross-border cooperation.

The eastern border regions are facing unprecedented challenges and crises

Members are convinced that the scale of the challenge facing the eastern border regions calls for **a dedicated and long-term financial response**, primarily through cohesion policy, complemented by instruments under the direct and indirect management of the EU. Future financial and policy measures should **preserve the long-term investment capacity** of these regions while addressing new strategic priorities, and should, where appropriate, be accompanied by adequate financial resources.

Parliament therefore called for the establishment, under the 2028-2034 cohesion policy framework, of a **dedicated top-up allocation** for the eastern border regions, in addition to the national and regional allocations already available to the Member States concerned and distributed on the basis of objective territorial vulnerability and strategic function criteria.

The resolution emphasised in particular that Member States and regions located on the EU’s eastern border should not be left to cope alone with the consequences of Russian military aggression, hybrid threats, and geopolitical pressure. Therefore, **solidarity** with the eastern border regions is not merely an expression of cohesion policy, but a strategic investment in the security, resilience, and future prosperity of the entire EU.

The Commission is invited to:

- recognise the eastern border regions as **strategic territories** important for the security, competitiveness and strategic autonomy of the Union and to ensure that their specific needs are taken into account in future cohesion policy regulations and programmes;

- ensure that the eastern border regions constitute a **horizontal priority** in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), including within the framework of national and regional partnership plans;

- **ease the implementation of programmes** in the eastern border regions, in particular by simplifying programme modification procedures, adapting eligibility rules and extending implementation deadlines when the consequences of geopolitical developments justify it.

Parliament insisted on the need to establish a **structured governance framework**, going beyond the Commission's annual dialogue with the eastern border regions, in order to ensure the systematic involvement of their local and regional authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society in the implementation of the EU's strategy for these regions.

Addressing the specific needs of the eastern border regions

Parliament underlined that the suspension of cross-border cooperation programmes with Russia and Belarus has created a persistent rift in support for the EU's eastern border regions. The Commission is urged to establish, within the framework of the future Interreg programme, a dedicated funding envelope amounting to at least the equivalent of the funds lost by the regions bordering Russia and Belarus.

The resolution emphasised that the specific needs of the eastern border regions should be **addressed horizontally** across all relevant EU financial instruments from 2028 to 2034. It called on the Commission to take into account the **specific circumstances** faced by these regions through targeted calls for proposals, higher co-financing rates, and targeted technical assistance. Furthermore, the EU strategy for the eastern border regions should be tailored to the specific needs of each region, including those related to natural resources, the economy, and human capital.

Security and resilience as prerequisites for the socio-economic development of eastern border regions

Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to ensure that, during negotiations on national and regional partnership plans for the period 2028-2034, specific provisions are made to enable **investments** in the eastern border regions in the following categories:

- healthcare infrastructure in border regions within a 150 km radius of the EU border with Russia, Belarus or Ukraine;

- local and regional road infrastructure and smart, green and sustainable mobility solutions;

- energy infrastructure strengthening regional energy self-sufficiency, critical digital infrastructure and connectivity, dual-use infrastructure, civil preparedness and resilience infrastructure, infrastructure supporting border protection and cross-border cooperation, infrastructure contributing to food security, and essential local public service infrastructure;

- the management of security-related incidents and crises, including those resulting from hostile acts, such as hybrid threats;

- human capital, skills, retaining young people in the regions and community resilience,

Parliament called on the Commission to prioritise investments that improve **transport accessibility** in border regions, including road and rail links, inland waterways and ports, and the modernisation of border crossings with Ukraine and Moldova. It encouraged public-private partnerships supported by EU financial instruments to mobilise private investment in the eastern border regions.

Lastly, the resolution called on the Commission to review the rules on **State aid** in order to reduce the administrative burden and increase the flexibility of support for businesses operating in regions along the EU’s eastern borders.