

# Growth and jobs: cohesion policy, Community strategic guidelines, 2007-2013

2006/0131(AVC) - 13/07/2006 - Initial legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present the Community Strategic Guidelines on cohesion.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Decision.

CONTENT : the Community Strategic Guidelines form the basis for preparing national strategies, or national strategic reference frameworks, and, in a second stage, the individual operational programmes. They are based on the following objectives and principles:

- cohesion policy has become a key instrument at Community level to deliver the renewed Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs as defined by the integrated guidelines for growth and jobs;

- the new framework for cohesion policy in 2007-2013 is based on both the concentration of financial resources on the least developed regions and a strong thematic concentration within the new programmes on the renewed growth and jobs agenda;

- the financial instruments at the disposal of cohesion policy are the Structural Funds (the ERDF and the ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. It should be noted in this context, that in the guidelines, there is, intentionally, no analysis by Fund. The question of the appropriate instrument under each heading is a matter for the programming phase and depends on the nature of the planned expenditures (infrastructure, productive investment, human resource development, etc);

- the Guidelines concern only the part of national and regional investments co-financed by the Structural Funds and the Cohesion fund;

- the Guidelines need to be read alongside the legislative framework. The latter define the purpose and the scope of assistance of each Fund, while the Community Strategic Guidelines seek to identify within that scope those areas where cohesion policy can most effectively contribute to the realisation of Community priorities, particularly those of the renewed Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy;

- within the Guidelines, governance is a transversal element underpinning all actions in the interest of better and more efficient management of cohesion policy programmes and improving the quality of public policy-making;

- within the new framework for cohesion policy in 2007-2013, the territorial dimension is equally seen as a transversal element requiring that particular attention be paid to the impact of programmes in terms of promoting balanced sustainable development and exploiting the opportunities in cities, rural areas and areas with natural handicaps.

According to the guidelines and in line with the renewed Lisbon strategy, programmes co-financed through the cohesion policy should seek to target resources on the following three priorities:

- **improving the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities** by improving accessibility, ensuring adequate quality and level of services, and preserving their environmental potential;

- **encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship and the growth of the knowledge economy** by research and innovation capacities, including new information and communication technologies; and
- **creating more and better jobs** by attracting more people into employment entrepreneurial activity, improving adaptability of workers and enterprises and increasing investment in human capital.

The Commission goes on to examine key aspects of each of these broad areas with specific guidelines under each heading. Not all of these more detailed guidelines will be relevant to all regions. The most appropriate mix of investments ultimately depends on the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each Member State and region and specific national and regional circumstances. The guidelines rather represent a single framework which Member States and regions are invited to use when developing national, regional, and local programmes, in particular with a view to assessing their contribution to the objectives of the Union in terms of cohesion, growth and jobs. In taking on board the Lisbon agenda in the new programmes, attention is drawn to the following principles:

- cohesion policy should focus to a greater extent on **knowledge, research and innovation, and human capital**. Accordingly, the overall financial effort in support of these fields of action should be significantly increased;
- Member States and regions should pursue the objective of **sustainable development** and boost synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions;
- Member States and regions should pursue the objective of **equality between men and women** at all stages of the preparation and implementation of programmes and projects;
- Member States should take appropriate steps to **prevent any discrimination** on the basis of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the various stages of implementing the Funds. In particular, accessibility for disabled persons is one of the criteria to respect in defining operations cofinanced by the Funds and to take into account during the various stages of implementation.