

### **Why a public consultation?**

The European Commission publishes every three years a Cohesion Report, as requested by the Treaty, covering the progress towards economic, social and territorial cohesion and how public policies have contributed to this goal.

The Conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report provides broad orientations on the future of Cohesion Policy for the post 2013 programming period in terms of its mission and set-up; how the policy can be made more effective and its impact improved so to achieve greater European value added; how the governance of the policy and the involvement of stakeholders can be further strengthened; and how its implementation can be streamlined and simplified.

To enable all stakeholders to express their views on the Conclusions of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, a large public consultation took place from 12<sup>th</sup> November 2010 to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2011.

### **Who participated in the public consultation?**

In total, 444 contributions were received, including 26 contributions from Member States, 225 from regional and local authorities, 66 from economic and social partners, and 37 contributions from European interest organisations on territorial issues. Moreover, there were 29 contributions from civil society organisations, 21 from citizens, 15 from private companies, 8 from academic and research institutions, 1 from EU institutions and 9 from other stakeholders. There were also 5 contributions from public bodies and contributions from Norway and Switzerland.

All contributions received are published on the website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/5cr/answers\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/5cr/answers_en.cfm)

### **What are the main results from the public consultation?**

#### *Enhancing the added value of cohesion policy*

The role of cohesion policy in promoting the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy was overwhelmingly welcomed by respondents, although many stressed the need for flexibility and the use of a bottom-up approach to meet specific needs and challenges

Greater coordination between the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), Cohesion Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) was important to respondents. Many contributors also supported the introduction of incentives linked to the performance of cohesion policy.

#### *Strengthening governance*

Contributions show a general consensus on the need for an ambitious urban agenda, but also for better linkages between urban and rural areas and the development of macro-regional strategies. Since cohesion policy involves many different governance levels and stakeholders, many contributors supported the idea of reinforcing the partnership principle through a greater involvement of local partners.

#### *A streamlined delivery system*

A simpler delivery system was the basic idea endorsed by most contributions who argued for a revamped audit process as well as stronger coordination between the funds. Many respondents underlined the need for an improved monitoring and evaluation system.

#### *The architecture of cohesion policy*

According to most contributions, the European Social Fund should be maintained as is, but synergies and greater coordination with the European Regional Development Fund would be welcomed. Finally, contributors confirmed that special support is needed for those regions which have not yet completed their process of catching up. This would include a new intermediate category of transitional support.

#### **What are the next steps?**

The results of the public consultation will feed into the proposals on the post 2013 legislative framework which will be adopted by the Commission later this year.