



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 7. 5. 2013
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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion on the proposals for the future European cohesion policy {COM(2011) 607, 610, 611, 612, 614, 615 final}, forming the "cohesion package", and apologises for the long delay in replying.

The Commission agrees that specific development requirements of regions should be taken into account and reflected in the relevant operational programmes. However, the thematic concentration on a limited number of predefined goals is a prerequisite for the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy, agreed by the European Council. The requirement of allocation of at least 50% of ERDF resources in less developed regions to three pre-determined goals is meant to ensure a more effective use of funds in line with Europe 2020 objectives.

The Commission fully shares the Senát's view that the new regulatory framework should create a stable and predictable environment enabling successful implementation of cohesion assistance. The Commission seeks to promote a clear legislative framework in its discussions with the Council and the European Parliament.

Regarding the adoption of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), the Commission took note of the Senát's concern, also expressed by both co-legislators, and proposed to address it by splitting the CSF into an Annex to the Common Provisions Regulation and a Delegated Act. As to macro-economic conditionality, the Commission would like to underline that this type of conditionality is critical to the success of the European Structural and Investment Funds. It will ensure that cohesion policy supports the new economic governance framework and that the benefits of cohesion policy are not undermined by unsound macroeconomic policies.

The Commission takes note of the Senát's concerns as regards the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). However, as for the transfer of the EUR 10 billion from the Cohesion Fund to the Connecting Europe Facility specifically for projects in the transport sector, the Commission has proposed in the Common Provisions Regulation covering the European Structural and Investment Funds that the amount is transferred from each Member State's Cohesion Fund allocation for the whole period on a pro-rata basis.

Furthermore, the European Council has proposed on 7-8 February 2013 that this transfer will co-finance pre-identified projects listed in the annex to the CEF Regulation; until 31 December 2016, the selection of projects eligible for financing should be carried out respecting the national allocations transferred from the Cohesion Fund to the Connecting Europe Facility. Thereafter, any unused funds could be redeployed to new projects through new competitive calls for proposals.

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The Commission would like to insist that housing should not be supported via the Cohesion Fund, given its specific purpose. Housing can be supported by the ERDF. On the other hand, support to air protection could be undertaken via the Cohesion Fund under the investment priority linked to improving the urban environment.

The issue the Senát raised in relation to the European Territorial Cooperation Regulation has been already addressed by a corrigendum. The Commission had no intention to deviate from the rule that is applicable in the current funding period.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns expressed by the Senát and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*