



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senát for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the 8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050 {COM(2022) 34 final}.

The Commission takes the views in this Opinion very seriously and recognises the structural challenges faced by the Northwest region of the Czech Republic. Its Gross Domestic Product per head has been systematically lagging behind the national average and failing to converge with the EU average.

Against this background, the region has received particular attention from the EU cohesion policy. Over the previous programming periods, substantial resources were directed towards the Northwest region. In the 2007–2013 period, there was a self-standing regional operational programme North West with a total allocation of EUR 763 million. At the end of 2018, aid intensity under the 2014-2020 programmes amounted to around EUR 800 per capita and per year. However, the implementation of the programmes has been regularly hampered by the low administrative capacity of the region.

The situation of the region was duly taken into consideration in the negotiations of the 2021-2027 programmes. In particular, the Commission has engaged a deep policy dialogue with the Czech authorities about the possibility of specific measures for Northwest region, based on the programme manifesto adopted by Czech government in January 2022 and stressing the need to address the growing differences between the regions of the country.

In this programming period, the resources channelled via the EU cohesion policy will be complemented by those of the Just Transition Fund which can be a real contribution towards the change and modernisation of the economic and social situation of the

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region. Part of the Czech Recovery and Resilience Plan will also benefit the Northwest region, notably the education and social pillar, which is highly relevant for the region as the components dealing with modernisation of employment services, labour market development and education could bring positive changes.

The Commission stresses that, under shared management, it is primarily up to the national and regional governments to build the right policy mix, coordinating national and EU instruments, to steer the development of this region. National policies and tailor-made technical assistance aiming at enhancing pipelines of high-quality projects can also play a key role in kicking off a vivid development process in the region and high attention should be paid to principle of 'do no harm to cohesion' principle in the design of policies at all levels of government. In addition, the Commission provides support to the implementation of the Just Transition in the Northwest region and the Moravian-Silesian region under a dedicated Technical Support Instrument project.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senát and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue with it in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Margaritis Schinas
Vice-President*