



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 6.9.2012
C(2012) 6170 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion on the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 {COM(2011) 615 final}. The Commission apologizes for the delay in replying.

The Commission shares the views of the Senat on the importance of inclusion of national and regional needs in the Partnership Contract through the analysis of disparities and development needs mentioned in Article 14(a) of the proposed regulation and through the involvement of the partners referred to in Article 5. The Commission also fully agrees with your view that early planning for fulfilment of the ex-ante conditionalities and indeed preparation of programmes in general will be critical in order to ensure the successful implementation of future cohesion policy.

As to the macroeconomic conditionalities and the performance reserve, the introduction of a stricter performance framework has been conceived with the aim of strengthening cohesion policy's contribution to Europe 2020 by ensuring not only an increased focus on results but also that the conditions for successful investment are in place across all EU regions. Experience of past cohesion policy programmes has shown that reliance on the negotiation process or optional tools alone have not been enough to avoid bottlenecks in implementation or to ensure an adequate focus on results. At the same time, the Commission would like to take this opportunity to emphasise that the new performance framework has been prepared taking into account the views of stakeholders (e.g. in the High Level Group reflecting on future cohesion policy and the Conditionality Task Force) and with a view to avoiding an unnecessary increase in administrative cost or burden.

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The Commission also takes note of your views regarding co-financing rates and financial management. The preparation of the proposals on these aspects of future cohesion policy has been guided by the aim to maximise simplification and streamlining of the policy, while at the same time maintaining adherence to the budgetary and other principles of cohesion policy including regularity, legality, sound financial management and co-financing.

The Commission hopes that these explanations serve to clarify the concerns raised in your Opinion and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue on this very important issue.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*