The Future of EU Cohesion Policy

Danish Regions welcomes the Commissions initiative to open a public consultation on the future of EU cohesion policy.

The contribution from Danish Regions is based on a broad consultation of the five regions in Denmark. The consultation paper has been debated and adopted by the board of Danish Regions, which is composed by 17 elected regional politicians.

Continued Focus on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment
The EU cohesion policy post 2013 should continue to focus on growth and on economic, social and territorial cohesion. Territorial cohesion will formally be a part of the EU legal basis, once the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified by all EU member states during 2008.

The programmes under the Structural Funds should continue to support the goals under the Lisbon strategy, i.e. to support initiatives and efforts to increase economic growth, competitiveness and employment, in order for EU to be competitive and to meet future conditions in a globalised and further liberalised world market.

Efforts should be focused on development of the knowledge based economy through increased innovation, research, technological development and ICT infrastructures, i.e. continuation of a highly prioritised activity field in the current Structural Funds period.

Increased Focus on Sustainability including Issues related to Climate Changes
Climate changes will, according to all expectations, become one of the biggest socio-economic challenges in future. The changes will have far reaching impact on the entire society and the economy.
Therefore, reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases and sustainability in general should be highly prioritised in the next Structural Funds programmes – also in line with the Gothenburg Strategy on sustainability.

The entire energy system, including the transport system both in relation to resources, production, distribution and consumption must undergo a far reaching adjustment. A massive concerted action must be made on innovation in order to find and promote climate friendly solutions.

**Continued Support for All Regions in the EU**

The regions in Denmark are satisfied with the current organising of the Structural Funds in objective 1, 2 and 3 programmes. Through regional programmes under objective 1 and 2, the actions can be focused according to regional conditions and potentials.

The whole EU territory should be eligible for Structural Funds support in the next period. The programmes in the least favoured regions (objective 1) should focus on economic goals, whereas the remaining programmes (objective 2 and 3) should continue to focus on the efforts from the current period, i.e. growth, innovation and employment. At the same time action should be taken to reach the sustainability goals laid down in the Gothenborg Strategy.

In Denmark, the programmes should support the development and promotion of new sustainable technologies, and ensure that less favoured geographical areas are included in development programmes in interaction with more prosperous areas. The programmes should also concentrate on the connection and relation between cities and rural areas.

**Increased Territorial Cooperation**

With global development exchange of know how and international cooperation projects will play an increasingly important role. Therefore, trans-frontier, trans-national and interregional cooperation should be prioritised in the objective 3 programmes.

**Integrated Regional Action on Cohesion**

In Denmark, the EU cohesion policy is implemented through two programmes under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. Furthermore axis 3 and 4 of the European Agriculture
Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries Funds axis for local development support interventions related to the cohesion policy.

Ideally, the action in each region should be made up of one common development strategy, one common set of rules, one common programme structure, one administration structure and integrated projects (multi funds projects), under which the actions of the various programmes could be combined. Such integrated and long term regional development programmes could more easily support and further the EU strategies on sustainability, growth and jobs, which form the focal point for cohesion policy.

Furthermore, added value could be gained if a number of other EU-programmes were coordinated closely or even included in the cohesion policy, e.g. the competitiveness and innovation framework programme (CIP), the labour market programme (PROGRESS), the TEN-network, the environment and nature programme (LIFE+), the framework programmes for research and technological development (FP 7) etc.

An integrated regional action on cohesion will enable the regions to draw up long term regional development strategies in relation to the financing and programming possibilities offered by the EU.

Simplified and Regionalised Administration
The administrative rules and procedures of the Structural Funds should be examined thoroughly in order to reduce the administrative burdens. In some cases, the existing rules and procedures create real obstacles for application of the funds. The EU procedures should be simplified in order to be subject to the same reporting and control procedures as other public aid schemes.

Furthermore, regional administration of the programmes under the Structural Funds should be applied to a large extend, in order to ensure connection and coordination between other EU and national policies.