Dear Commissioner Hübner,

The South West of England is delighted to be able to make its regional contribution to the debate on the future of Cohesion Policy. We are grateful for your personal interest to our Region’s strategic direction through your presence at our Regional Economic Strategy launch and the Learning Summit in Cornwall over the last years.

European Cohesion policy has been a key part of South West England’s economic development framework and has had a positive transformational impact in our region. This impact was mostly felt in the partnership arrangements we have put in place and which continue to guide our inclusive approach to sustainable growth and development.

I am personally chairing the South West Cohesion Steering group which encompasses all stakeholders in the SW responsible for delivering Cohesion policy on the ground. The same group framed our Operational Programmes and continues to provide the overarching strategic direction towards an integrated approach to Regional economic development and governance. The same group is currently considering the post 2014 Cohesion debate and the EU budget review. The SW submission attached to my letter therefore reflects the views of the South West Cohesion partnership.

The key messages on future Cohesion policy we would like to highlight are the following:

- Cohesion Policy should remain an economic policy of the European Union assisting European regions not just by redistributing resources across the EU but primarily in shaping their economic development policies.
• Any future Cohesion policy should continue to explicitly link the renewed Lisbon agenda on more and better jobs and the Gothenburg agenda for environmental sustainability.

• European Cohesion policy should be seen as the vehicle and the driving force of a range of EU policies which have an impact at regional and local levels. Regional policy is the only policy that addresses all of the Union’s policies at territorial level and that is its added value.

I am sure we shall have the opportunity to address all of those issues and more specific ones at another occasion either in Brussels or when you next visit us in the South West.

With very best wishes

Judith Reynolds
Chair of the South West Cohesion Steering Group
Board member of the South West RDA