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Minutes

Meeting of the 11th Structured Dialogue with European Structural and Investments Funds' partners group of experts

19 November 2019, Brussels

I. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Gabriella Fesus from DG REGIO announced the agenda, which was approved.

II. NATURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was public, i.e. recorded (available to anyone inside and outside the European Commission) but not web-streamed. It was an ordinary session dedicated to providing an update on the preparation for the post-2020 period (update on co-legislative negotiations and on programming), an overview of the measures proposed for simplification, a presentation of complementarities between Funds and synergies with other instruments and finally an exchanges of views on the role of structured dialogue with lessons learned and ways to improve the dialogue.

III. LIST OF POINTS DISCUSSED

1. Preparation for the post-2020 period :update on the co-legislative negotiations

Eric von Breska (DG REGIO) presented the state of play of the negotiations and referred to the upcoming European Council of December 2019 which would discuss the multiannual financial framework (MFF). The Commission pointed out two important non-financial elements of the negotiating box that Member States want to water down: thematic concentration requirements, and decommitment rules. The cohesion policy legislative negotiations have focussed so far on the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) ‘blocks’ most relevant for preparing the next programmes: block 1 on programming, block 5 on management and control systems, and block 2 on enabling conditions. No agreement has been found yet between co-legislators, though a deal on these blocks before the end of the Finnish Presidency seems still in reach.

One of the main elements of the discussions relates to the partnership agreements, i.e. whether they should be obligatory for all Member States or not. There has been little progress on the ERDF/Cohesion Fund proposal. DG REGIO underlined that the Council pushes for an opening to support productive investments in large enterprises and fossil fuels, both items in principle excluded in the Commission proposals.

The Commission then referred to the Just Transition Fund mentioned in the political guidelines of the President-elect. This new Fund would aim at compensating the costs for the regions and citizens most affected by the transition to a carbon-neutral economy, not at financing the transition itself, which should be done through the mainstream programmes. It should be very focused. However, some key questions (e.g. eligibility for all Member States or not, or which criteria to use) are still under discussion.

CCRN asked for precisions on thematic concentration, and underlined that not financing large enterprises (co-)owned by public authorities may lead to not finding the right recipients for some projects. The European University Association (EUA) wondered about smart specialization in the negotiations. EUA, REVES and ENIL enquired about the monitoring of enabling conditions, emphasizing for the latter that the current ex ante conditional ties did not allow to reach the high standards set by the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Several participants (ECOLISE, ELARD, COPA-COGECA) highlighted the difficulty for small organisations and local people to access EU Funds, for instance for climate change initiatives. SME united insisted on the importance of a genuine partnership between socio-economic partners and public authorities for strategies to be efficient; ‘who’ and ‘how’ matter more than ‘how much’. CEMR wondered about the chances for the EAFRD to be re-integrated in the CPR. MEDCITIES asked about the ETC negotiations, adding as well the fear that an ‘n+2’ rule would mean more pressure put on the final beneficiaries.

On thematic concentration, DG REGIO underlined that the requirements could be watered down in different ways: lowering the figures, taking account of other Funds, etc. It noted in particular the disconnect between the commitments at political level (e.g. Paris agreement on climate) and the subsequent negotiations on the budget. The Commission emphasized that allowing all Member States –by modifying the current State aids rules- to support large enterprises would give a clear advantage to richer Member States, which is not what cohesion policy is aiming at. On smart specialization, the negotiations relate to the obligation or not for SME support to be part of a smart specialization strategy.

Enabling conditions will be monitored throughout the whole period. Member States will not receive payments as long as the Commission does not consider the enabling condition fulfilled. On access to funds for small organisations, the Commission indicated that community-led local development, integrated territorial investments and the future Just Transition Fund would involve local communities, and emphasized the changes in the local development strategies requirements in the 2021-2027 proposals.

The Commission concurred on the importance of partnership. This is why the CPR proposal strengthens the role of the monitoring committee, and roll over the Code of Conduct on Partnership, so that the latter applies to the preparation of the programmes of the next period; adopting a new one would necessarily take place after the adoption of the new legislation, while programmes would already be largely set up. Besides, the Commission sees the obligation for electronic data exchanges between programme authorities and beneficiaries (e-cohesion) as being easier and more transparent; beneficiaries should be helped if needed. The negotiations between the co-legislators do not go in the direction of moving back the EAFRD to the CPR. However, the Commission recalled that several provisions of the CPR proposal would apply to the EAFRD, such as the provisions on territorial development and on financial instruments. On European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg, the Commission mentioned that the co-legislators had provisionally agreed to move the maritime cooperation back to the cross-border strand, and to reintroduce the URBACT and Interreg Europe programmes.

Finally, DG REGIO explained the importance to keep the Commission proposal to progressively return to 'n+2' at the end of the 2021-2027 period, considering the very low level of payments of the 2024-2020 programmes.

2. Preparation for the post-2020 period : update on programming

Kadri Uustal (DG REGIO) outlined the informal programming negotiations. Based on experience from the past (2014-2020 process took on average 2 years), it is important to be faster in 2021-2027 in order not to delay implementation. As much progress as possible should be made on the programming documents during the informal stage to allow for their fast adoption once the new legislation is in place, in parallel with the work on the enabling conditions and simplified cost options to ensure a faster start of the implementation. The

Following the launch events, in spring 2019, Member States sent their roadmaps for cohesion policy programming during summer 2019 including a target date for the submission of mature programming documents ready for adoption before the end of 2020 and an intermediate date for the submission of complete drafts. An indicative calendar based on roadmaps foresees mature draft of programming documents are expected to be submitted by most Member States in the first half of 2020 and formal submission in the second half of 2020. On the Code of Conduct on partnership, the Commission has an active dialogue with most Member States (letter sent to Member States asking programming documents to be uploaded on relevant web pages).

LUMOS, SMEunited, REVES were pleased that negotiations started earlier this year but showed concerns over weakened implementation of the partnership principle. They explained that in some Member States the civil society has not been consulted at all. COPA have made research on the extent of dialogues on strategic planning documents in Member States, showing that some have some structured dialogues, while some have not (in East Europe). There are concerns over the selection of the organisations and the scope of the consultation. They called for reminding the Member States to comply with the code of conduct on partnership.

REGIO outlined that a reinforcement of rules on partnership implementation would need to be carefully approached. It was also a question of culture, which is intangible and hard to measure; it takes constant reminders and time to improve the consultation culture. There is a need for willingness by the public authorities and to exert constant pressure. The minimum rules outlined in the Code are already very clear. The extent and quality of partnership is a key theme discussed in the informal dialogue between the Commission and Member States. The Commission will continue to remind Member States about the importance of partnership. A letter has been recently sent by the Directors-General of DG REGIO and DG Employment calling on Member States to ensure effective partnership and transparency including making programming documents accessible to the public.

EASPD asked the Commission to publish best practices on the implementation of the partnership principle. It highlighted that some Member State do not leave time for sufficient consultation trying to progress fast with programming.

ETUC noted that the Code of conduct is an excellent document and showed concerns over the idea that the implementation of the Partnership Principle is a question of culture as we should not forget there is a kind of European culture that every Member State has to promote when adhering to the EU. There are some principles in the EU all Member States have to respect, as for economic measures, why not for social measures. This code of conduct should be included in the future regulation as enabling condition. The Commission should oblige the Member States to see where they are in the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

SMEunited suggested, as we cannot oblige Member States to comply with the code of conduct, can't we just encourage them to do so, giving them rewards or could we think about granting more power to monitoring committee. Could we not improve this through the monitoring committee? Another issue should be to provide technical assistance funding to partners to participate in consultation meetings.

REGIO recalled that there was a study done on the implementation of the partnership principle in the 2014-2020 period with best practices, presented back then to the structured dialogue, that will be sent again to the partners. The Commission does take partnership very seriously. Good partnership improves the quality of programmes and their implementation. The code of conduct is the minimum requirement for partnership. Partners were encouraged to inform DG REGIO where there are cases of insufficient/flawed partnership and REGIO will raise the issue with the Member State concerned.

3. Measures proposed for simplification

Ula Romanska (DG REGIO) gave an overview of the 80 simplifications that were introduced by the Commission in its legislative proposal for the post-2020 cohesion policy.

These simplifications concern the structure of the legal framework as well as every stage of programming and implementation of cohesion policy programmes. Their primary aim was to cut red tape and significantly decrease administrative burden for beneficiaries as regards implementation of projects on the ground, as well as for the authorities that manage the programmes.

Energy Cities and Business Europe asked the Commission to explain the European Urban Initiative, REVES asked how the EU State aid rules would apply in the financing not linked to cost. EAPB was interested in the practical aspects of the proposal to reimburse the technical assistance of Member States on the basis of a flat rate and raised concern whether the new system of reporting and monitoring, in particular without the annual implementation report, will ensure that the partners will be still involved in the policy dialogue. A member asked whether there will not be less oversight, as regards handling complaints on application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe) asked whether having no ex ante evaluation will not undermine the efforts towards climate neutrality.

EUA (European University Association) asked to explain the improvements in the Seal of Excellence mechanism. ECOLISE asked what are the lessons learnt. In order to speed up implementation, it is necessary to reach out to civil society. SMEunited suggested to establish an equivalent of "alternative dispute resolution mechanism" on the application of the rules.

REGIO explained the key elements of the European Urban Initiative and the improvements in the Seal of Excellence mechanism that are linked with the current revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation. Financing not linked to cost is a way of financial management between the Commission and the managing authority, but it does not derogate from correct application of the EU State aid rules at project level – they have to be duly followed.

As regards the proposal to reimburse the technical assistance on the basis of a flat rate, REGIO explained that administrative support for partners could be covered as well, and highlighted the opportunity to use financing not linked to cost for capacity building of partners.

REGIO outlined that the new reporting and monitoring system should ensure more detailed and frequent data availability for the members of the monitoring committee. The dialogue between the Commission and the managing authority will be mainly based on the documents already available to the members of the monitoring committee.

The Charter on Fundamental Rights is one of the enabling condition, and the post-2020 proposal requires that these conditions are fulfilled throughout the programming period. In addition, the proposed rules on project selection highlight the link with the Charter and require that these projects have to be in line with the documents that fulfilled the enabling condition. The proposal to delete the ex ante evaluation should not - in the Commission's opinion - undermine the efforts towards climate neutrality, because this tool was not really serving this purpose (it was rather a useful tool for the Member State to substantiate their proposals in the programmes), while there are other more efficient means: thematic concentration on policy objective 2 or climate-proofing of investments in infrastructure.

The Commission expressed hopes that through the new Policy Objective 5 the civil society will have an opportunity to be more involved in local development strategies and projects on the ground.

4. Complementarity between Funds

Monika Tchavdarova (DG REGIO) presented the overall setup of the current and the future programming periods and arrangements to ensure complementarities in the programming documents and during implementation. It is of utmost importance for Member States to establish a strong coordination mechanism at the appropriate level, respecting the partnership principle. A number of examples were presented showing good practice of exploring synergies and complementarities by implementing projects co-financed by different ESIF/CPR funds and EU instruments (such as Horizon and InvestEU).

Katja Reppel (DG REGIO) presented the complementarities between the planned Horizon Europe actions and the future ERDF investments: Horizon focusing mainly on excellence R&D and trans-national projects, while ERDF on the impact of RDI investments in the region. The key to synergies are Smart Specialisation Strategies: they have to involve H2020 beneficiaries in the entrepreneurial discovery process, and open the possibility to team up with innovation actors from other regions around related smart specialisation priorities, including in order to apply for Horizon Europe funding for projects or for partnerships. The main form of complementarities and synergies between ERDF and Horizon Europe is the sequential use of the funds, for instance via previously ERDF-supported research infrastructures, that are used for Horizon Europe projects, followed possibly by SME support from the ERDF to bring innovations to the market. The proposed new CPR and Horizon

Europe Regulations also encourage transfers of ERDF funds into Horizon, cumulative funding and using ERDF for redeeming Seals of Excellence of projects that are not funded from Horizon, but were evaluated and found very good by Horizon evaluators.

ERRIN asked about transfers between ERDF and Horizon Europe and on funding level in the context of the Seals of excellence. DG REGIO explained that the Commission has proposed to open the possibility to issue Seals of excellence to a range of future EU programmes. It remains to be seen whether all programmes will in the end do so. On funding level, Horizon Europe funding is no State Aid, whereas the ERDF is, so the aid intensity / funding rate is not the same (the funding rate is 70% for Horizon Europe and depending on the type of RDI activity and the size of the SME around 50 % for ERDF). The Commission has announced in the forthcoming revision of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) that the same aid intensity could be granted for ERDF funding, provided the managing authorities align to the financing terms within Horizon Europe.

Axel Badrichani (DG REGIO) presented the complementarities between the InvestEU programme for 2021-2027 and the Structural Funds. This guarantee (centrally managed instrument replacing current existing instruments) bringing together the many different EU-level financial instruments, will be of approximately EUR 38 billion in the EU budget.

It is divided in 4 thematic policy windows (sustainable infrastructure – Research, Innovation and digitisation, SME companies and social investments and skills) and should allow to mobilise EUR 650 billion in additional investment across Europe. InvestEU should be operational as of 2021. The products that will be deployed are being designed in close cooperation with the potential implementing partners. 75 % of the guarantee will be given to the EIB group. The remaining 25% will be given to the other implementing partners. A call will be launched at the beginning of 2020 for allocation part of this envelope.

The CPR proposal foresees the possibility to use this mechanism to deliver on the ground our cohesion objectives especially since the 4 windows are aligned with the Cohesion's policy objectives. In practice, it works as follows. The Member States with the ERDF or ESF or CF allocation could decide to contribute up to 5% of their fund allocation (ERDF, ESF+, CF...) to InvestEU either at partnership agreement level or at programme level which will be put in the Member State InvestEU compartment. A contribution agreement between the Commission and the Member State will be signed which will specify the policy objectives to which Invest EU should contribute. The Commission will then be in charge of signing a guarantee agreement with an implementing partner that can be suggested by the Member State. Complementarity could also be achieved at project level when for example the source of financing are combined (e.g. an ERDF grant element with a loan covered by the InvestEU guarantee).

EASPD asked if the same complementarity rules will cover the 4 policy windows, COPA was interested to know about the target of this InvestEU and Business Europe about the indicators and the multiplier. FEANTSA asked about the timing and the nature of the call. CAN Europe expressed concerns about how far the climate proofing guidelines take into account the strategic considerations for long term of the investment decisions and asked about the timeline for the delegated act.

DG REGIO explained that the same rules apply to the 4 policy windows. The beneficiaries of the guarantee will be the European Investment Bank Group (75%) and other implementing partners as (usually) the Member States' national and regional promotional banks (25 % = 10 billion), about the call 60 % should be pre-allocated in the second part of 2020 and another call is planned for 2024. For enterprises, the target groups are SMEs and the mid-caps who will receive the loans. The multiplier effect foreseen for InvestEU-EU compartment is 13.7 (slightly less than under the Juncker plan due to the more policy focus). For the Member State compartment it depends on the product (the multiplier has to be estimated before deploying the product on the ground) depending also from the target group (if risk or not).

About the prioritisation, DG REGIO invited partners to look at the “investment guidelines” (which describes the eligibility rules and emphasized in a quite targeted way where the money should go for each of the policy windows) which will become a delegated act of the Commission.

On eligibility, DG REGIO explained that when there is a contribution agreed to Invest EU, only the rules of Invest EU will apply to the amounts contributed which will fall under the responsibilities of the Commission (accountable to MS). It will be one single set of rules (no mix between ERDF and InvestEU).

On the climate proofing, it is not part of the investment guidelines but each operation has to be checked with this climate proofing screening prior to submitting the operation to the investment committee which takes the final decision. There is currently a working group in place to discuss this climate proofing.

Marianne Doyen (DG EMPL) and Andor Ürmös (DG REGIO) presented a few projects highlighting the possible complementarity of the ESF, ERDF and EAFRD respectively. It included projects focusing on higher education, regeneration of deprived /segregated neighbourhoods and Community-led Local Development actions in rural areas. It was also highlighted that there was a significant potential for better complementarity and synergies. In rural areas for instance, where investment is often scarce, the ESF can be used to: facilitate access to and improve the quality of services, help people find or get back to employment, develop worker's skills that are adapted to rural reality (eg. digital skills for farmers), invest in education, etc.

ECOLISE asked about the practical arrangements to combine funds and whether there was a “complementarity manual” to help with timeline, programming and practical implementation.

DG EMPL explained that such arrangements depend greatly on Member State's initiatives, own challenges and planned mechanisms for coordination. The Commission will in addition support mutual exchange and learning, as well as sharing of good practices.

EUROMANET asked whether we could already draw some conclusions about the best model of coordination of funds, looking at some country examples.

DG REGIO highlighted that it would be very difficult to select the ‘best’ model, as exhaustive evaluation is not available. At the same time, we can already promote several initiatives, namely multi-fund programmes, establishment of a coordination body, strong coordination mechanism among call for proposals, etc. It is also highly important to mention that the lack of administrative capacity would significantly limit the efficiency of these models.

Guido Castellano (DG AGRI) illustrated examples of complementarities between the rural development fund (EAFRD) and other ESIF in the current programming period (e.g. as regards the funding of broadband development in Italy). He underlined that similar forms of complementary actions could be pursued in the next programming period, despite the fact that EAFRD will not be included any longer under the scope of the Common Provisions Regulation. He also reminded that some demarcation lines between ERDF and EAFRD have been included in the Commission proposal on the new CAP, together with some provisions requiring the Member States to illustrate in their future CAP Plans the approach taken to ensure synergies and complementarities between EAFRD and other Union Funds.

Addressing questions from the floor, he confirmed that EAFRD will continue to contribute to the development of basic services and social infrastructures in rural areas, together with the regional fund. He underlined that given the few EAFRD resources available, complementarity with ERDF support will be key in this respect. Concerning good practices to ensure complementarity between funds, he referred to the examples shown in the presentation and underlined that dialogue between different administrations is essential for the good and complementary functioning of the funds. He also clarified that the concept of “Smart Villages” can apply to a geographical area bringing together different villages/towns and that the actual time for beneficiaries to get the support, following an application, is dependent on many factors, including efficiency by the authorities concerned by the calls.

Luca Marangoni (DG MARE) recalled the potential synergies between Sea basin and Macro-regional strategies and cooperation programmes and presented three projects Atlantic Energy Cluster, AMALIA and ENSEMBLE providing concrete evidences of how complementarities can be created amongst instruments (e.g. ERDF, FP7, EMFF) and initiatives (Atlantic and Western Mediterranean Strategies). He also described the possible complementarities between ERDF and EMFF on marine research and innovation (S3), plastics and marine litter, decarbonisation, marine renewable energies, environmental protection coastal and infrastructure adaptation to climate change, and between ESF and EMFF on ocean literacy, blue skills and maritime career development.

CAAC (Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities) asked how do macro-regional strategies fit into the context presented by the several DGs. DG MARE confirmed that the Commission will continue implementing sea basin and macro-regional strategies (MRS) approaches in the future programming period. On a more general question from COPA/COGECA on territorial vs sectorial focus of the Funds, DG MARE replied by providing an examples on complementarities between thematic and territorial-based instruments on climate change adaptation (e.g. type of financing and size of the investment), including some elements on Funds demarcation.

Matthijs Korzilius (DG HOME) presented how synergies between EU Funds in the 2014-2020 programming period are supported in Finland following the challenges it experienced due to the increased numbers of asylum applicants in 2015 and 2016 (i.e. through establishing a coordination group of relevant organisations, using joint calls). In particular, complementary support through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the European Social Fund was emphasised.

With regard to the proposals for the 2021-2027 programming period, Marianne Doyen (DG EMPL) and Andor Urmos (DG REGIO) presented the scope of interventions, which will be financed by ESF+ and ERDF. It reflects the regulatory proposal for 2021-2027 ESF+ and ERDF.

Furthermore, the different scope programming under policy objectives 4 and 5 was explained, taking some special attention to regulatory requirements. PO4 actions should be linked to the corresponding enabling conditions, whereas actions under PO5 should meet the minimum requirements, such as sustainable urban development strategy and partnership with stakeholders. Territorial instruments (CLLD, ITI, SUD) can be used under both PO4 and PO5.

Matthijs Korzilius (DG HOME), together with Marianne Doyen (DG EMPL) and Andor Urmos (DG REGIO) presented the coordination between AMF, ESF+ and ERDF in the 2021-2027 period. The Asylum and Migration Fund will provide support for measures in the area of reception and early integration of third-country nationals – the types of integration measures that are typically needed during the first phase of integration such as civic orientation courses, basic language courses and support services targeted to the need of third-country nationals. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund will be able to provide support within their scope of intervention. ESF+ can support vocational training, access to quality and non-segregated public education, access to community-based social and healthcare care services etc. ERDF can support infrastructure developments in education, social- and healthcare, housing etc., access to mainstream and non-segregated services. No specific questions were addressed to DG HOME.

As a general coordination mechanism (also including the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development, EAFRD measures), several models were explained, such as multi-fund operational programmes, joint call for proposals, logical sequence of calls, common selection criteria, and integrated use of funds at projects level.

ENIL (European Network for Independent Living) raised the point that EAFRD will not be part of the Common Provisions Regulations in the future period. So, EAFRD measures might not be aligned with the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

DG AGRI replied that the scope of rural development interventions in the next programming period will remain basically unchanged, including as regards United Nations requirements mentioned in the question.

CEMR asked how to overcome the administrative difficulties in the scope of the Integrated Territorial Investments

DG REGIO replied that indeed ITI is not an easy instrument; it requires some strong administrative capacity. At the same time, cities in Poland introduced ITI successfully e.g. Lodz), introducing integrated measures in metropolitan areas.

IV. TOPICAL ISSUES

Gabriella Fesus (DG REGIO) updated the members on topical issues looking at the first semester of the Croatian Presidency, e.g. Just Transition Mechanism / Just Transition Fund, preparing an input on the Urban Agenda, EU strategy for outermost regions, midterm evaluation on Jaspers. DG REGIO also referred to the European Semester integrating the Sustainable Development Goals as outlined in the political guidelines of the President and the upcoming Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy and the Country Reports.

V. ROLE OF THE STRUCTURED DIALOGUE: LESSONS LEARNED AND WAYS TO IMPROVE THE DIALOGUE

Gabriella Fesus (DG REGIO) informed partners that the decision (C(2014)4175 of 26 June 2014) which gives a legal basis to the Structured Dialogue group of experts will expire on 31/12/2020 but will be renewed in a simplified form by article 6(4) as included in the Commission's proposals for the Common Provisions Regulation for the period post-2020.

The session represented the opportunity to take stock and discuss what could be improved for the dialogue. A reflection exercise has also started in the context of a steering group chaired by DG AGRI which analyses the impact of the Civil Dialogue Groups on policy making and the interlinkage with Better Regulation tools and identifies areas for improvement. The final report is foreseen for beginning of 2020.

DG REGIO shared some ideas to improve the work of the group (e.g. further increase two-way communication, organise more thematic meetings (smaller groups who meet more than twice a year on specific subjects) and more feedback on what has been done by the Commission with the received input during the structured dialogue.

REVES, EASPD, ENIL, BusinessEurope, CEE Bankwatch Network, CAAC (Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities) and European University Association expressed much satisfaction about the dialogue some referring to the exchange on topical issues praising the agenda. All of them underlined the need for the Commission to make better use of the expertise of the partners. In particular, they suggested: a) thematic meetings with REGIO experts for those interested in a particular topic, b) possible webinars on specific topics of interest, c) possibility to have more meetings of this group per year, d) inviting a representative from the rotating Presidency of the EU Council and e) explore ways to engage more with our citizens and to help them better understand European policies by using a more easy to comprehend language.

ECOLISE congratulated the Commission for a useful meeting and for many issues put on the table that deserve reflection. However, if one of the guiding concepts is to 'Bring Europe closer to its citizens', much more work needed to be done to reach out to citizens. He reiterated several points made at the meeting which needed urgent solutions in particular on ensuring access to funds by small organisations and local communities as well as providing financial support for civil society organisations.

DG REGIO thanked all contributions and called on partners to submit the list of topics which could be discussed in smaller groups with REGIO experts. REGIO also recalled the next High Level Conference on citizens engagement that will take place on 6th of February 2020 which has been sent to partners earlier.

Finally, DG REGIO summarised the main takeaways of the meeting reminding partners that their feedback on concrete cases and difficulties their members are facing on the ground in terms of the implementation of the partnership principle in any Member State would be welcome. Colleagues from the geographical units would be able to follow up with the respective Member State. The same applies for examples on gold-plating.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place in spring 2020, the date to be soon defined. Partners will be invited to submit suggestions for points on the agenda.

VII. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

BUSINESS EUROPE

CAN EUROPE

CEE BANKWATCH NETWORK

CCRN

CEETTAR

CAAC

CPMR

COPA

COGEPA

EAPN

ECOLISE

EDF

EUROPEAN YOUTH FORUM

EUROMA NETWORK

ETUC

EARTO

ENERGYCITIES

ENIL

ENSIE

ERRIN

EUA

EURO HEALTH NET

EUROCHILD

EASPD

EAPB

ELARD

FEANTSA

LUMOS

MEDCITIES

PREPARE NETWORK

REVES

SMEUNITED

CCRE