



# GROUP OF HIGH-LEVEL SPECIALISTS ON THE FUTURE OF COHESION POLICY

Increasing the policy effectiveness through renewed  
conditionality mechanisms

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# Focus of the paper

## Conditionality in EU governance

Origins

Expansion

Generalization

A conditionality regime = a set of interrelated conditions + meted of government

Strengths

Limitations

This regime has implications for Cohesion Policy

# The consolidation of a comprehensive conditionality regime

**Table 2: the EU's comprehensive conditionality regime**

Conditionality types	Economic Governance	Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion		EU budget
	European Semester	Recovery and Resilience Facility	Cohesion Policy Funds	Financial interests of the EU
Policy oriented/Thematic		x	x	
Macroeconomic	x	x	x	
Spending	x	x	x	x
Negative	x	x	x	x
Ex ante		x	x	
Ex post			x	
Managerial		x		
Value-based		x	x	x

# Main questions addressed by DG Regio

- How should cohesion policy macroeconomic conditionality be further designed?
- How to increase policy effectiveness through renewed conditionality mechanisms, including enabling conditions, macro-economic conditionality and the rule of law conditionality?

# Lessons learned /to be learned

1. Conditionality serves several functions
2. Complex political process & various tensions at the top and at the bottom
3. Change over time: from coercion to flexibility & coordination
4. Democratic & legitimacy concerns
5. Limited outcomes in terms of policy change

# Issues to be addressed & my responses to the two questions

1. Macroeconomic conditionality & EU funds
2. Democratic concerns: from governance to a new method of government ?
3. Coordination between the RRF & Cohesion Policy
4. Policy effectiveness

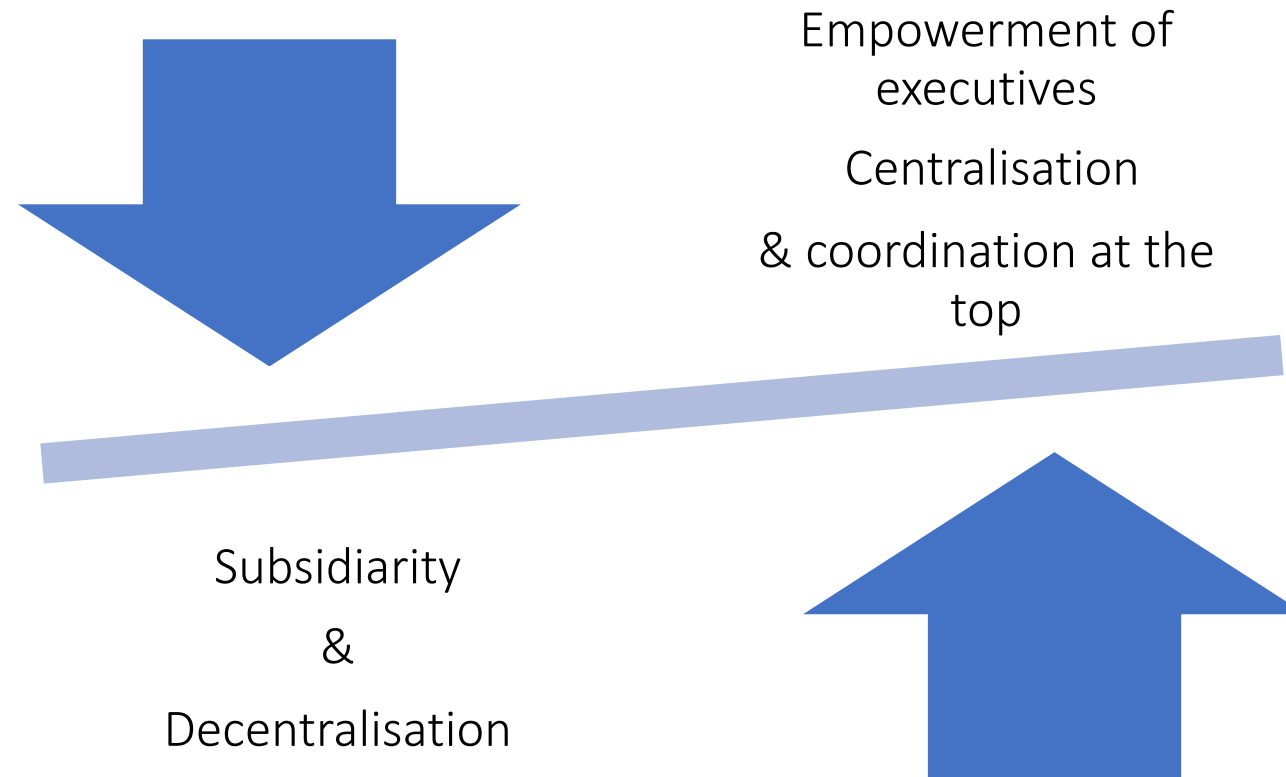
# More specific lessons & questions for the future

## 1. Macroeconomic conditionality & EU funds

- Controversial provision, disputed but never applied
- Confusion between aims related to reduce macroeconomic imbalances & Cohesion
- Future discussion concerning the role of macroeconomic conditionality
  - in the Economic governance *tout court* leading to its suspension or revision of the SGP?
  - its role in Cohesion Policy
  - A balance between strict rules & incentives is needed as well as between conditionality & flexibility

# More specific lessons & questions for the future

## 2. Democratic concerns: from governance to a new method of government





# More specific lessons & questions for the future

## 3. Coordination between the RRF & Cohesion Policy

- Cohesion has taken centre stage in the NGUE
  - A step forward?
  - A too restrictive definition of cohesion depriving it from its specificities?
  - It is unclear how much the NRRP will help to promote social, economic, and territorial cohesion.
- If the RRF is more centralised, Cohesion is under shared management.
  - Given the political ambitions of the RRF and the capacity constraints of the Member States, there is a risk that Cohesion will be abandoned and that centralisation, which is already a key feature of the regime in place, will be increased at the expenses of the partnership principle.

# More specific lessons & questions for the future

## 4. Policy effectiveness

- The conditionality regime should not be idealized
- Corruption & violation of norms and values can be resistant to conditionality
- Too many conditions can also weaken the expected outcome
- Risk of transforming the process into a too bureaucratic exercise & questions about the credibility of the assessment

# Conclusions

Thanks to the RRF, Cohesion Policy has been strengthened in the EU.

- Yet, it is more important than ever for this policy to retain its **specificity/identity** so that it is not torn between different objectives that may be in competition, conflict or tension with each other.

If ex ante and enabling conditionalities can play a key role in Cohesion Policy, macroeconomic conditionality has proved to be superfluous.

- The **articulation between conditionalities** in this complex regime needs to be reconsidered.

Ultimately, it is time for attention to be paid to the national dimension, vital for the political, economic and social cohesion of the Member States.

- What is **implemented** and how matters not only for the future of EU integration but also for the state of democracy.
- Concrete **outcomes** are needed in policy areas in which EU citizens expects to see considerable improvement (Barca 2009). This conclusion of the Barca report is even stronger today after a decade of crises.

**Thank you!**

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