



Declaration

on the Commission proposal for the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) on regional development and cohesion

1. The European Commission's proposals currently make it possible to maintain cohesion policy interventions in all European regions. Nevertheless, CEMR is concerned that a decrease in the budget devoted to this policy estimated at 7%, this reflects a significant loss of ambition at European level.
2. Should they be validated by the Council and the European Parliament, these proposals will have an impact on the Union's ability to meet the common European objectives: the fight against climate change, social inclusion, economic development ... to which the policies implemented by the local authorities contribute in a decisive way.
3. The effect will be even more detrimental since cohesion policy, unlike other initiatives proposed by the European Commission, is an objective enshrined in the EU Treaties and forms part of its DNA.
4. In this context, CEMR and its national member associations commit themselves to defend an ambitious cohesion policy, which protects the values of the European Union, and which places European territories, in all their diversity, at the heart of the European project. CEMR also commits to raising the visibility of the European project among to citizens.
5. We are also concerned that elements of the new provisions in the MFF proposal could weaken the combined use of all EU Structural and Investment Funds integrated territorial development, including the widening division between the European Regional Development Fund and the ESF+.
6. While we acknowledge and understand the motivation of the Commission to financially support public administration reform processes in the Member States, we believe that this should not be part of the regional development and cohesion budget. As regards links to the European Semester and measures to achieve convergence towards the euro area, we request assurances that local and regional authorities will not be penalised by decisions taken by the EU national governments.
7. We welcome the Commission's initiatives to safeguard sound financial management and the rule of law and the promotion of justice, rights and values – objectives that we share.
8. Regional development and cohesion policy can to a certain extent, be a tool to support the implementation of sectoral policies, such as climate and energy transition, but its core objective should remain unchanged: to contribute to territorial, economic and social cohesion in the EU and within the countries.
9. CEMR welcomes the proposed modernisation, simplification and flexibility for the implementation of the programmes, and we are pleased that a number of our key points on these issues have been taken into account.



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10. The upcoming regulations for the specific programmes will provide clarification on the implementation of the proposed financial framework; Building on the position agreed at CEMR's Policy Committee in June 2017, CEMR will prepare a detailed assessment and comments in order to contribute to the negotiations in the European Parliament and with the Member States that are underway.
11. In the face of the new economic, climatic and social challenges facing Europe, and in a context of territorial reforms and new distribution of competences taking place in many Member States, which have an impact on their regulatory framework and financial capacities, the European Union needs to rebuild its relationship with local and regional governments, relying on their capacity for innovation and investment. This implies closely involving local and regional governments and their networks in the definition and implementation of European programmes, particularly in the framework of the partnership agreement: local governments are now the main financiers and investors in key sectors of cohesion policy. None of the objectives that the European Union has set itself in these areas can now be achieved without their help and participation.
12. In the upcoming programme negotiations, it will also be essential to integrate the commitments made by the European Union and the Member States on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals, and to reflect relevant common policies, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, Gender Equality, etc.

The declaration was adopted by the CEMR Policy Committee members gathering in Bilbao, on 11 June 2018.

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