



EU Cohesion policy post-2013

AER position

With regard to the resolution adopted by the Assembly of European Regions at its General Assembly, in Udine, Friuli Venezia Giulia (I), 8 November 2007

With regard to the position adopted on the EU budget review by the AER Presidium on 10 March in Frankfurt/Main, Hessen (D)

With regard to the work realised by the AER task force on cohesion post-2013 since its creation in June 2007,

With regard to the AER study on Future Regional Policy 2014+ and the recommendations it comprises,

Considering as already commonly agreed by AER members that:

1- A European Union regional policy is essential and that neither re-nationalisation or any Open Method of Coordination can be considered as acceptable if the cohesion and subsidiarity principles are to be fully respected in the future;

2- Increased attention must be paid to the concept of territorial cohesion¹, if EU regional policy truly is to promote the objective of sustainable (environmental, social and economic) development of our communities;

3- The principle of subsidiarity requires to give democratically-elected politicians a say in EU funds allocation and management, in order to gain efficiency and give Regions the means to implement the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas;

4- Stronger priority should be given to territorial cooperation and networks after 2013, in order to build on the large experience already acquired all over Europe and foster new partnerships, which encourage innovation and constant improvements in Regional administrations;

5- Increased synergy between future EU regional policy and other community policies is necessary to ensure optimal investment and increase its efficiency. The European Social Fund, in particular, should be regionalised and work with rules similar to ERDF to enable tailor-made approaches, which address the real problems faced by the regions, in key areas such as employment, human capital, poverty, housing...

¹ The AER definition of "territorial cohesion" is available in a specific paper to be adopted by the AER Bureau as well.

the Bureau of the Assembly of European Regions agreed on the following additional statements:

6- Future EU regional policy should continue to support both convergence and sustainable growth throughout the entire EU territory.

7- As a consequence, the use of Structural Funds should be earmarked with regard to the Gothenburg agenda to the same extent as Lisbon. Indeed, in the context of climate change and more general environmental concerns, it seems fair to consider Gothenburg as a similar pre-requisite for regional development.

8- In addition, all Regions should benefit from EU funding, with varying levels of intensity and to this end, **new indicators, apart from GDP, should be defined** in order to allow for a more subtle definition of eligible regions, the level of funding and policy evaluation;

9- With regard to future territorial cooperation, this implies that its scope should be enlarged to ensure increased consideration for health and social affairs, as integral part of the Lisbon strategy, and the development of sustainable rural-urban partnerships.

10- Moreover, future territorial cooperation should go beyond the sole exchange of best practices: Pilot actions and concrete joint implementation activities should be possible, as well as the participation – as full partners – of private stakeholders. It is also a priority that third states should be involved in territorial cooperation to a wider extent.

11- At policy level, synergies should be enhanced between CAP and Cohesion policy, in order to support a multifunctional development of rural areas. **EU rural development policy should therefore be integrated in EU cohesion policy, with its full budget, whilst enhanced coherence could be reached as early as the programming stage through common strategic plans.**

This AER position will be enriched with the various upcoming political debates, within and outside of the AER and will constitute the main AER basis for discussion with the relevant institutions during the debate on future cohesion policy which will take place in 2009. It will be completed with concrete technical proposals with regard to the implementation of future EU regional policy and its simplification.

*Adopted on 11th June 2008,
AER Bureau Meeting, Wroclaw, Dolnoslaskie (PL)*