



Council of European Municipalities and Regions
European Section of United Cities and Local Governments

The President

Open letter to the
Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy

Brussels, 9 April 2019

Re: Informal Ministerial Meeting 11-12 April 2019; Trilogue negotiations on the future cohesion policy

Dear Ministers,

On the occasion of your informal meeting on Cohesion Policy on 11-12 April under the Romanian Presidency, I would like to share with you and on behalf of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions the main concern of European local and regional governments, as regards the ongoing trilogue negotiations on the future of cohesion policy and the European Structural and Investment Funds regulations.

CEMR and its members regret that it has not been possible for the trilogue parties yet, to agree on the legislative package for the future cohesion policy 2021-2027 in the current mandate period. Although the European Parliament agreed early on its position on the Common Provisions on the European Structural and Investment Funds, the negotiations with the Council have been halted.

The Parliament's reports on the cohesion policy funds - in particular the reports on Common Provision Regulation and on the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund - reflect the majority of the key demands of CEMR and of the [Cohesion Alliance](#) for a strong and ambitious cohesion policy in the coming seven years. However, CEMR and its members fear that the proposals will be significantly watered down, when the negotiations continue after the European elections.

In particular the following points are crucial for local and regional governments, and we would like to call on each Member States to adequately consider those recommendations and those made by the European Parliament:

- The members of the European Parliament reaffirmed that Cohesion policy is one of the main investment policies of the EU and **should keep the same level of financing as in the current period (2014-2020)** despite the numerous new tasks and the vast impact of Brexit on the EU-budget. CEMR welcomes the proposal to set the budget for economic, social and territorial cohesion to the amount that was available for the current funding period € 378 billion (the European Commission proposed a budget of € 330 billion).

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- The European Parliament vowed to **uphold and strengthen the Partnership principle**, allowing local authorities and their associations to be actively involved in the drafting of Partnership Agreements and operational programs in all member states and all regions. The discussions in the European Council on introducing flexibility in the implementation of the Partnership Principle with the removal of the binding character of the Partnership Agreement are considered an endangerment of a key principle by local and regional governments. The application of the full Partnership Principle remains crucial to achieve maximum effectiveness of the European funds, by actively including the level of government that is closest to the citizens in all relevant decisions. The partnership principle should be included in all relevant regulations as a key pillar in the architecture of all funds, including the ESF+ and the EAFRD. The rules must ensure an active involvement of all partners throughout the whole planning and implementation process.
- The European Parliament supports a **place based and integrated territorial development approach for all types of territories**. In particular, CEMR has warmly welcomed the specific 5% ERDF allocation foreseen for sustainable development in non-urban in areas, in addition to the strengthening of support for sustainable urban development up to 10% of ERDF resources. In particular and following CEMR recommendations, the Parliament has included specific support for areas suffering from natural and demographic handicaps such as ageing and depopulation and included the [Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities](#) to be supported by the new European Urban Initiative.

We believe that Cohesion policy is at the heart of European integration and therefore it deserves the appropriate level of ambition. You will find our full and detailed recommendations in an annex to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Stefano Bonaccini

