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REPORT

on EU Member States preparedness to an effective and timely start of the new
Cohesion Policy Programming period
(2013/2095(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Derek Vaughan

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on EU Member States preparedness to an effective and timely start of the new Cohesion Policy Programming period (2013/2095(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 174 et seq. of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund¹,
- having regard to the amended Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund (COM(2013)0246),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2011 on the Commission's fifth Cohesion Report and the strategy for post-2013 cohesion policy²,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 October 2010 on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013³,
- having regard to its resolution of 23 June 2011 on the state of play and future synergies for increased effectiveness between the ERDF and other structural funds⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 October 2010 on the future of the European Social Fund⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 December 2010 on good governance with regards to the EU regional policy: procedures of assistance and control by the European Commission⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2011 on absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds: lessons learnt for the future cohesion policy of the EU⁷,

¹ OJ L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

² OJ C 33 E, 5.2.2013, p. 21.

³ OJ C 371 E, 20.12.2011, p. 39.

⁴ OJ C 390 E, 18.12.2012, p. 27.

⁵ OJ C 371 E, 20.12.2011, p. 41.

⁶ OJ C 169 E, 15.6.2012, p. 23.

⁷ OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p. 22.

- having regard to the Commission Communication of 26 January 2011 entitled ‘Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020’ (COM(2011)0017) and the accompanying staff working document (SEC(2011)0092),
 - having regard to the Commission’s eighth progress report on economic, social and territorial cohesion of 26 June 2013 (COM(2013)0463),
 - having regard to the Commission report of 18 April 2013 entitled ‘Cohesion policy: Strategic report 2013 on programme implementation 2007-2013’, (COM(2013)0210), and the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2013)0129),
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 24 April 2012 entitled ‘The partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds – elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership’ (SWD(2012)0106),
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 14 March 2012 entitled ‘Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020 – the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund’ (SWD(2012)0061, Parts I and II),
 - having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of 16 June 2011 on the role and priorities of cohesion policy within the EU 2020 strategy (CESE 994/2011 – ECO/291),
 - having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of 12 December 2012 on the partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds – elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership (CESE 1396/2012 – ECO/330),
 - having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee of 22 May 2013 on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion – including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020, (CESE 1557/2013 – SOC/481),
 - having regard to the resolution of the Committee of the Regions of 31 January - 1 February 2013 on ‘Legislative package on Cohesion Policy post-2013’ (2013/C 62/01),
 - having regard to the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 7-9 October 2013 on recommendations for better spending (COTER-V-040),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (A7-0007/2014),
- A. whereas Member States are in the process of preparing their Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Operational Programmes (OPs) for the new programming period 2014-2020;

- B. whereas the final agreement on the legal framework for the European Structural and Investment Funds is expected to be reached before the end of 2013;
- C. whereas the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) sets out common rules for five European Union Funds: the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund;
- D. whereas cohesion policy is aimed at reducing the disparities that exist between EU regions by focusing funding on strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- E. whereas cohesion policy contributes to the achievement of the Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;
- F. whereas cohesion policy, which constitutes the main policy for the development of the EU, contributes to overcoming the economic crisis for most of the Member States;
- G. whereas every possible effort must be made to ensure that the delivery and implementation of programmes pertaining to the cohesion policy for 2014-2020 are simplified as much as possible for all authorities and beneficiaries;

Ensuring an effective and timely start to the new Cohesion Policy Programming period

1. Recognises that cohesion policy funding has successfully invested billions of euros in creating new jobs, supporting innovative businesses and developing transport links throughout the EU over recent years;
2. Highlights, however, the fact that disparities still exist, and are in some cases widening, between EU regions, and that continued investment of EU funding at local and regional level is vitally important to ensure that support continues to reach areas that are in need of economic, social and environmental regeneration;
3. Highlights the fact that cohesion policy must, inter alia, tackle the growing youth unemployment in the European Union;
4. Stresses that in the current economic, financial and social crisis, cohesion policy funding in a number of Member States represents a key source of public investment and that this is a situation that may require flexibility on the part of the Member States concerned in order to relaunch its economies; highlights, in this connection, the importance of ensuring that Member States and regions are in a position to begin implementing the new round of cohesion policy funding as soon as possible at the start of 2014;
5. Welcomes the adoption of both the MFF for 2014-2020 and the legal framework for

cohesion policy; stresses that a satisfactory outcome has been achieved with a view to ensuring the swift and effective launch of the new cohesion policy;

6. Points out that the backlog of outstanding commitments (or RAL, from the French ‘reste à liquider’) amounted to two-thirds of cohesion policy funding by the end of the MFF for 2007-2013¹; stresses the need to find a reliable means of reducing the risk of the implementation of EU programmes being blocked owing to a lack of payments; draws attention to the fact that the N+3 rule, while essential for securing the implementation of projects supported by the cohesion policy, will have an impact on the accumulation of the RAL in coming years, in particular in the event of delays in the launch of the new programmes;
7. Notes also that, in addition to an effective and timely start to the new cohesion policy programming period, ensuring the quality of PAs and OPs must be of paramount importance to ensure that funds are used to their full potential in the long term;
8. Underscores its position on the importance of a compulsory review and revision of the next MFF by the end of 2016, in order to allow the next Commission and Parliament to reassess the EU’s political priorities, to adapt it, if necessary, to new challenges and to take full account of the latest macroeconomic projections;

The Common Provisions Regulation

9. Welcomes the improvements made to the regulation that will introduce a stronger and more integrated approach to cohesion policy funding through the Common Strategic Framework; recognises that this it is vital to ensuring that projects have a greater impact and produce tangible results; calls on the Member States to introduce even more measures simplifying the bureaucracy and administration of the programmes; believes that this should lead to smooth implementation of these programmes and efficient drawing of the funds;
10. Welcomes the proposals to introduce simplification measures throughout the CPR with a view to reducing administrative burdens; considers that making the process simpler for applicants, beneficiaries and managing authorities will bring added value to EU funding;
11. Recognises that cohesion policy can make a vital contribution to delivering Europe 2020 targets and therefore highlights the importance of aligning cohesion policy with Europe 2020 goals through thematic concentration on a limited number of objectives; stresses that this approach leaves sufficient flexibility to address local and regional needs;

¹ If amending budget No 2/2013 is approved for an overall value of EUR 11.2 billion, it is estimated that the RAL could reach EUR 224 million in total by the end of 2013, while in its initial estimates the Commission suggested that the RAL would be EUR 180 billion at the end of 2013.

12. Underlines the importance of the Smart Specialisation Strategy as a way of complementing the goals of the Europe 2020 growth strategy by focusing on identifying and maximising areas of competitive strength, sharing best practice and integrating research, innovation and education through EU-wide partnerships;
13. Highlights the fact that, while conditionality measures already exist in cohesion policy, the next programming period will be aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of funding by making funding conditional on compliance with certain criteria; takes the view that cohesion policy is a policy in support of cohesion between regions that should not serve as a guarantee for other EU policies aimed at macroeconomic reforms in the Member States;
14. Points out that adapting to the changes introduced by the CPR could cause some delay in the preparation of PAs and OPs;

Progress in Member States

15. Highlights the fact that it is clear that Member States are at very different stages in their preparations; recognises that, while some Member States are making good progress and have submitted their draft PAs to the Commission for approval, others are further behind in the process;
16. Points out that, on the whole, those newer Member States (EU12) which experienced part of the 2000-2006 programmes and all of the 2007-2013 programmes are well advanced in preparations compared to some of the EU15;
17. Highlights the fact that some Member States are dealing with a significant reduction in their budgets for the next programming period while in others there is ongoing debate on the distribution of budgets within the Member States; recognises that both of these issues could cause a delay in preparations;
18. Underlines the fact that the Member States which are making good progress with preparations for the next round of cohesion policy funding submitted their draft PAs and OPs to the Commission for informal observations in June or July 2013;
19. Recognises that many of the Member States that are performing well began the preparatory process as early as 2010 by inviting relevant stakeholders to contribute to discussions on formulating needs and priorities; welcomes, therefore, the efforts made to begin the preparatory process as early as possible and believes that this clearly encourages greater preparedness;
20. Emphasises that advanced preparations are dependent on the relevant authorities and organisations having sufficient capacity to invest time and money in preparations and to make sufficient personnel available at an early stage;
21. Recognises that these advanced preparations meant that in some cases the ex-ante evaluation and strategic environment impact assessments (SEIA) were performed in a

timely manner, allowing the drafts to be amended in September and October 2013, based on the outcomes of these evaluations;

22. Recognises that some Member States have experienced changes of government that could impede the preparations for the next programming period; highlights the fact that, in cases like these, the advantages of having systems in place that ensure that all administrative work continues regardless of changes in governments are vital to the continued preparations;
23. Points also to the need for the preparations for cohesion policy funding to be enforced at political level so as to ensure that finalising the PA is a priority for governments;

Progress with Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes

24. Points out that some Member States are planning to change the content of their OPs; welcomes the fact that certain Member States have decided to switch to multi-funded programmes or to reduce the number of OPs at regional level;
25. Notes that the amount of control and coordination allotted to regional administrations by central government varies greatly according to the organisational structure in the different Member States, with some regions being extremely active and having almost complete control of most aspects of cohesion policy funding and representation in the PAs; points, in this connection, to the Code of conduct, which acknowledges the pivotal role of local and regional actors as well as civil society organisations and in which the partnership principle is safeguarded as regards the cohesion policy for 2014-2020;
26. Highlights the fact that the local and regional dimension should be given full consideration; stresses the important role regions play when choosing areas of competitive strength;
27. Highlights the fact that one way of ensuring that the approach to PAs functions in Member States with devolved administrations is to include separate chapters in the PAs drawn up by the regional administrations; stresses that this approach ensures that administrations with devolved powers for European Funding Programmes are more directly involved in the development of PAs and have the option of developing their own programming ideas and delivery mechanisms;
28. Recognises, however, that this could have an impact on the preparedness of the Member States as a whole;
29. Points out that efficient coordination is needed at Member State level to meet the deadlines for preparation of OPs which reflect local and regional development needs, as the responsibility for the content and administration of OPs should lie, where applicable,

with local and regional administrations, in line with the internal organisation of each Member State, if PAs are to be concluded in a timely manner;

30. Recognises, however, that a reduction in OPs at regional level would involve a substantial management and organisational change and might bring with it an increased risk of delay at the outset due to the changes caused by the complexity of implementing the OPs alongside programming at different national and regional levels;
31. Notes that the Commission is aware of considerable interest in multi-fund programmes, as provided for in the CPR, with many Member States planning to have at least one or more multi-fund programmes in the 2014-2020 programming period; stresses, in this connection, that this approach should be taken as efficiently as possible and must not lead to bottlenecks or delays; recognises that the different institutional settings in the Member States are acknowledged in the CPR and measures are provided for in order to accommodate specific cases; underlines the fact that regional and local levels are best placed to identify development needs and to implement programmes in proximity to the citizens, organisations, enterprises and authorities concerned;
32. Recognises that the ability to prepare the PAs and OPs at an advanced stage depends on whether Member States undertake sufficient preliminary analyses of the country's situation and future trends; stresses that this will ensure that EU funds make a more effective contribution to achieving the objectives set for the country;
33. Calls on the Commission to make the preparedness of Member States' Partnership Agreements public, e.g. by means of a summary per Member State containing information on the state of its preparations, the proposed content and consultations with the relevant stakeholders so that the other Member States and authorities may learn from good practices and approaches;

Lessons from 2007-2013

34. Highlights the fact that for many Member States, transferring methods and mechanisms from the 2007-2013 programming period to the post 2013 period will be a major issue; stresses that ensuring that ongoing projects continue to be effective while new projects are being developed is also a challenge;
35. Recognises that for many Member States preparations took longer than expected at the beginning of the 2007-2013 programming period; stresses that this is something that many administrations have remedied by ensuring that the new PAs and OPs are delivered in a more timely manner;
36. Considers that the examples provided by Member States clearly show that coordination between different measures, OPs and funds need to be improved and that the involvement of local authorities, regional organisations and social and economic partners needs to be enhanced;

37. Recognises that common problems identified in the previous programming period included having priorities that were too broadly defined; calls, therefore, for a more strategic and streamlined approach to priorities in the future, with fewer priorities targeted at specific objectives;
38. Welcomes the fact that, on the basis of successful experiences from the previous round of funding, Member States are seeking to enhance the leveraging of private sector funding in order to open up alternative sources of funding to complement traditional financing methods; stresses that, at a time of heavy fiscal constraint and reduced lending capacity on the part of the private sector, the increased use of financial instruments can foster public-private partnerships, achieve a multiplier effect with the EU budget, open up alternative sources of finance and guarantee an important financing stream for strategic regional investments; highlights, therefore, the importance of setting out clear rules for using innovative financial instruments, such as loans, guarantees and equity investments, as complements to grants in order to encourage cooperation between enterprises, public sector organisations and educational institutions;

Effectiveness of funds

39. Points out that it is clear from the experiences of previous funding programmes that ensuring a positive, long-term impact for the funds is vitally important; insists, furthermore, on the importance of the quality of programmes and the objectivity of spending;
40. Highlights the fact that the focus on a results-led approach was mentioned by many Member States as a target for preparing the next round of funding; welcomes the examples given by some Member States of ways of taking a more efficient approach to defining expected results in advance in order to allow funding to be directed towards proposals to achieve these objectives;
41. Stresses that coordination across policy areas and recognition of national and regional economic, social and environmental priorities are cited as being vitally important by many Member States; takes the view that, where applicable, national operational programmes should take into account development objectives at local and regional level; points out that generating synergies between the various sources of available EU funding and the budgets of the Member States and of regional and local authorities should be encouraged in order to increase the effectiveness of public sector investment in the EU;

Synergies with other policies and instruments

42. Considers it essential that Member States recognise the potential for alignment between all of the funds covered by the CPR;
43. Is encouraged by the fact that some Member States are looking at developing the use of new instruments such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), Integrated

Territorial Investments (ITIs) and Joint Action Plans (JAPs); understands that there is, however, a mixed response to the new instruments and that an analysis of Member States' current plans shows that CLLD will be more widely implemented than ITIs, especially in the EARDF compared to the ERDF due to CLLD's longer existence in the EARDF programme and due also to the fact that ITIs are a new instrument that will need some time to be properly put into practice; recognises that it remains to be seen how the initial preparations will translate into these instruments being fully implemented;

44. Considers CLLD to be an excellent way of encouraging bottom-up participation from a cross-section of community actors, based on the past success of the LEADER programme in rural development; calls on the Member States and regions to make use of the opportunities offered by CLLD;

45. Recognises JAPs as a positive step towards results-based management, in line with one of the overarching aims of cohesion policy post 2013;

Simplification

46. Stresses the importance of implementing simpler preparation and implementation methods for projects and is encouraged by the indications that this is being achieved by Member States;

47. Welcomes the emphasis on simplification in the CPR; notes, however, that in reality simplification could be difficult to achieve due to the differences that remain between the funds introduced by the fund-specific regulations;

48. Welcomes the positive steps taken towards simplification and greater transparency in the management of ESI funds; points out that a simplified application process for beneficiaries, with clear and accessible information on the procedure and on funding possibilities, was identified by many Member States as an important aspect of preparations for the programming period 2014-2020; welcomes this as a way of ensuring that the preparation and implementation of projects run smoothly, with reduced bureaucracy for applicants; calls on Member States and regional and local authorities to exchange best practice geared to simplifying procedures, and, while acknowledging that stringent rules on controls and auditing are necessary, to ensure that they are proportionate so as not to add an unnecessary burden;

49. Recognises that e-cohesion can be vital to reducing bottlenecks and ensuring simplification, and welcomes the reference by some Member States to its use; believes that this could also make a significant contribution to the preparations for future funding programmes;

Partnership

50. Emphasises that the decision-making process and the formulation of PAs must involve collaboration at national, regional and local level in the planning, development and implementation of EU cohesion policy funding programmes; believes that the principle of multi-level governance is essential to effective management of the cohesion policy; stresses, in this connection, the need to involve regional and local authorities and stakeholders fully in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the programmes; underlines the importance of ensuring an adequate flow of information to, and capacity building measures and technical support for, these authorities in order to facilitate and optimise their contribution at all stages of this process;
51. Welcomes the increased involvement of all the relevant stakeholders, local and regional representatives, NGOs, economic and social partners, private businesses and universities, as illustrated by the examples provided by Member States; believes that development in cooperation with other organisations and stakeholders representing different economic, social and environmental viewpoints is important;
52. Emphasises that ensuring successful partnership can involve both a bottom-up and a top-down approach; points out that the ‘bottom-up’ approach, involving extensive discussions with representatives from the public, private and third sectors, was given as an example by one Member State that is making good progress in its preparations;
53. Highlights the fact that these ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’ approaches ensure that national strategies addressing the social, economic and environmental situation are included alongside extensive involvement at regional and local level; welcomes this effective way of guaranteeing that strategic requirements are met while at the same time engaging relevant stakeholders as far as possible in preparations;

Conclusions

54. Welcomes the agreement reached on the legal framework for cohesion policy alongside the conclusion of the CPR negotiations and the MFF;
55. Recognises the importance of multi-level governance in the preparation stages and points out that some of the most advanced preparations have been based on vital dialogue with stakeholders at regional and local level;
56. Highlights the Commission’s call for Member States and regions to strive to ensure that the PAs and Ops that are prepared are of the highest possible quality; notes that this will help to generate quality project proposals targeted at specific objectives to ensure that EU funding has the greatest possible impact;
57. Realises that active and well informed national and regional administrations that engage with the Commission can have a positive impact on advancing preparations; strongly

recommends, therefore, that the Commission and the national and regional authorities have a steady flow of information, such as details of upcoming implementing acts;

58. Recommends that Member States that are suffering severe delays should rigorously follow the recommendations issued by the Commission highlights the fact that the Commission should increase its support to ensure that these Member States' PAs and OPs are agreed as soon as possible; notes, therefore, that reviewing Member States' progress during the preparation stages would help reduce delays; notes also that during the implementation phase the Commission could come to the rescue of those Member States that are lagging behind;
59. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This Own Initiative Report looks at how prepared Member States are for the next round of Cohesion Policy funding. The document refers to evidence gathered from different Member States and reveals the extent to which Member States are prepared for the next programming period as well as some of the methods being employed at national and regional level. Your rapporteur welcomes further discussion on the subject of this report.

It is clear that national, local and regional budgets are under increasing pressures during the current economic climate. So, for many Member States and regions, Cohesion Policy funding is becoming increasingly important. This is emphasised by the added need to ensure that money is spent in a more effective way so that citizens can benefit fully from European funding. With this in mind, it is vital that Member States and regions take the necessary steps to prepare the Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Operational Programmes (OPs) in a timely and efficient way so as to be ready to implement the funding as soon as possible once agreement on the Common Provisions Regulation is reached.

In the context of the legislative package for Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 nearing its final negotiating stages and agreement expected on the Multiannual Financial Framework before the end of 2013 it is hoped that European Structural and Investment funding can be allocated to projects as soon as possible at the beginning of 2014. It is vitally important that projects can begin as soon as possible at the start of 2014 so that the use of European funding can be maximised in order to stimulate growth in the regions.

During the negotiations for the post 2013 Cohesion Policy, the European Parliament succeeded in achieving an increased focus on involvement from local and regional authorities and more flexibility for regions to set priorities according to their own territorial needs. The Parliament also prioritised issues such the importance of aiming investment towards stimulating growth and competitiveness, with financial instruments highlighted as an important mechanism for achieving these objectives.

The Partnership Agreement, agreed between Member States and the European Commission, sets out the essential parts of the programme management of all five funds covered by the Common Provisions Regulations: the European Regional Development Fund; European Social Fund; Cohesion Fund; European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; European Marine and Fisheries Fund.

It is clear that Member States are at very different stages of the preparatory process, with some having already submitted their draft PAs and OPs to the Commission. Your rapporteur explains some of the reasons for the delays in the report as: changes that Member States are implementing to their preparations compared to the previous round of funding e.g. structural changes of operational programmes; new administrative structures; discussion on the concentration of thematic objectives.

The issues of Partnership and Multi-Level Governance are crucial to the preparation and implementation stages and your rapporteur believes that dialogue between Member States and regional and local authorities must be maintained in order to ensure that funding is targeted

towards national and regional objectives. Regions with good relations with Member States during all phases of the Cohesion Policy preparation and implementation are those that have succeeded to ensure that their interests and needs are addressed.

The lessons learnt from the previous funding programme are also vitally important to Member States as they prepare for the 2014-2020 programme. Your rapporteur welcomes the efforts made by many Member States and regions to undertake a thorough analysis of the successes and failures of the 2007-2013 programme in order to expand and improve on existing ideas at the same time as developing new strategies to ensure effective delivery of Cohesion Policy funding.

Finally, your rapporteur urges a timely conclusion of the negotiations on the legislative package for Cohesion Policy and adoption of the MFF. It is hoped that the Member States that are slow to agree their Partnership Contracts and Operational Programmes will do so in a timely way in order for the programmes to begin as soon as possible in 2014.

15.11.2013

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS

for the Committee on Regional Development

on EU Member States preparedness for an effective and timely start of the new Cohesion Policy Programming period (2013/2095(INI))

Rapporteur: Frédéric Daerden

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the political agreement reached on 27 June 2013 on the MFF for 2014-2020; stresses that, with a view to ensuring a swift and effective launch of the new Cohesion Policy period, it is vital that the negotiations on the legislative package, the partnership agreements and the operational programmes be concluded at the earliest opportunity; emphasises that any delay will result, in budgetary terms, in a concentration of payment requests at the end of the period;
2. Points out that the backlog of outstanding commitments (or RAL, from the French ‘reste à liquider’) amounted to two-thirds of Cohesion Policy funding by the end of the MFF for 2007-2013¹; stresses the need to find a reliable means of reducing the risk of implementation of EU programmes being blocked owing to lack of payment; draws attention to the fact that the N+3 rule, while essential for securing the implementation of projects supported by Cohesion Policy, will have an impact on the accumulation of the RAL in coming years, in particular in case of delays in the launch of the new programmes;
3. Believes the principle of multi-level governance to be essential to effective management of the new Cohesion Policy; stresses, in this respect, that the local and regional authorities should be fully involved, within their own spheres of competence, in the preparation of the programmes and agreements and in their implementation and evaluation; underlines

¹ If amending budget No 2/2013 is approved for an overall value of EUR 11.2 billion, it is estimated that the RAL could reach EUR 224 million in total by the end of 2013, while in its initial estimates the Commission suggested that the RAL would be EUR 180 billion at the end of 2013.

the importance of ensuring an adequate flow of information to, and of technical support for, these authorities in order to facilitate and optimise their contribution at all stages of this process;

4. Insists that the generation of synergies between the EU budget and the budgets of the Member States and of regional and local authorities is essential to any effort to increase the effectiveness of public sector investment in the EU; repeats its request to the Commission that it indicates how the role of the EU budget can be strengthened in this respect;
5. Reiterates that, in order to maximise the impact of EU aid, an integrated approach with coordination between the various sources of available funding and consistency between existing policies and regulations are essential for rectifying the adverse consequences of fiscal consolidation policies;
6. Underscores its position on the importance of a compulsory review and revision of the next MFF by the end of 2016, in order to allow the next Commission and Parliament to reassess the EU's political priorities, to adapt it, if necessary, to new challenges and to take full account of the latest macroeconomic projections;
7. Welcomes the positive steps taken towards simplification and greater transparency in the management of EU funds; underlines that simpler procedures could lead to a reduction of shortcomings and, therefore, to better use of European funds; stresses the need to adopt a more ambitious approach at the level of the Commission and the Member States in order to simplify access to procedures for obtaining funding, public procurement rules and monitoring arrangements, and to ensure that clear and accessible information is available on beneficiaries of EU funds and funding possibilities.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	14.11.2013
Result of final vote	+: 27 -: 3 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Marta Andreasen, Jean-Luc Dehaene, José Manuel Fernandes, Eider Gardiazábal Rubial, Salvador Garriga Polledo, Ivars Godmanis, Ingeborg Gräßle, Lucas Hartong, Anne E. Jensen, Ivailo Kalfin, Sergej Kozlik, Jan Kozłowski, Alain Lamassoure, Jan Mulder, Juan Andrés Naranjo Escobar, Nadezhda Neynsky, Dominique Riquet, Alda Sousa, Derek Vaughan, Jacek Włosowicz
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Maria Da Graça Carvalho, Frédéric Daerden, Edit Herczog, Paul Rübig, Peter Šťastný
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Jean-Paul Besset, Arkadiusz Tomasz Bratkowski, Jolanta Emilia Hibner, Helmut Scholz, Tadeusz Zwiefka

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	18.12.2013
Result of final vote	+: 35 -: 1 0: 3
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Charalampos Angourakis, Catherine Bearder, Victor Boştinaru, Francesco De Angelis, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Danuta Maria Hübner, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Mojca Kleva Kekuš, Constanze Angela Krehl, Iosif Matula, Jens Nilsson, Jan Olbrycht, Younous Omarjee, Markus Pieper, Ovidiu Ioan Silaghi, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jan Březina, Catherine Grèze, Juozas Imbrasas, Karin Kadenbach, James Nicholson, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, Vilja Savisaar-Toomast, Elisabeth Schroedter, Richard Seeber, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Michael Theurer, Derek Vaughan
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Carl Schlyter