

Cut cohesion policy red tape, urge Regional Development Committee MEPs

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The EU Commission should table a plan in 2017 to cut delays in EU-funded projects that aim to reduce disparities among EU regions by stimulating growth and job creation, say Regional Development Committee MEPs in a resolution voted on Tuesday.

This “cohesion acceleration plan” should simplify rules and procedures so as to end delays in European Structural and Investment (ESI) funded projects and make the “e-Cohesion” management tool fully operational, said MEPs.

“European Structural and Investment Funds investments help to reduce economic, social and territorial disparities within and between the European regions, as well as to generate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and job creation. Further delays in implementing cohesion policy programmes would jeopardise its contribution to achieving these goals and would put at risk EU’s current main investment instrument”, said the rapporteur and Chair of Parliament’s Regional Development Committee, Iskra Mihaylova (ALDE, BG)

"Cohesion acceleration plan"

MEPs call on the Commission to present a “Cohesion acceleration plan”, in the first quarter of 2017, to deliver projects under ESI-funded operational programmes faster. This proposal should be based on an objective analysis of the factors contributing to current delays, they add.

They also advocate combining funding from the ESI funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) in order to address the current fall-off in investment and simplifying state aid rules.

e-Cohesion

The Commission and EU member states need to make e-Cohesion management tool fully operational and easy to use. To keep payments in line with developments on the ground, national authorities need to enter data on project pipelines, procurement plans with planned and actual dates for tendering, contracting and implementation as well as all financial and accounting data related to invoices, co-financing and eligibility of expenditures, notes the text.

Background

According to recent data (30 November 2016), €14.750 billion in interim payments have been executed, implying lower payment needs than originally foreseen. Delayed implementation and consequently lower payment needs led to a reduction of payments under Heading 1B (economic, social and territorial cohesion) by €7.2 billion already in 2016, through Draft Amending Budget 4/2016, whereas at the same stage in the

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programming period 2007-2013 a similar draft amending budget was not necessary. Payment appropriations for 2017 are nearly 24% down on 2016.

The non-legislative resolution was adopted by 33 votes to 1 with 3 abstentions.

Further information

- Committee on Regional Development: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/regi/home.html>
- Meeting documents: <http://www.emeeting.europarl.europa.eu/committees/archives/201601/REGI>
- Profile of rapporteur Iskra Mihaylova (ALDE, BG): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/125128.html>
- Commission website on the European Structural Investment Funds: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/

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