



## In Focus

### Delegation to Seville

REGI committee organised a delegation to Seville and the Joint Research Centre to look for practical implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategies at local and regional level.

The delegation, which took place from 3 to 5 December, was composed of three REGI members (Lambert van Niesterlooj, Chair of delegation, Derek Vaughan and Lilliana Rodrigues) and one accompanying Member elected from Seville, Soledad Cabezon Ruis.

During the visit the Members had a number of meetings with the local and regional authorities and with scientists at the Joint Research Centre. The Members were primarily interested in the ways that the region of Andalusia, Spain's southernmost peripheral region suffering the highest unemployment rate, and its capital city Seville, implement the Smart Specialisation Strategies in order to make the best use of the region's potential and to improve the quality and efficiency of the European funding in the region.

A discussion at the Joint Research Centre - Institute for Prospective Technological Studies, host of the Smart Specialisation Platform, revealed the complex and divergent realities that European territories are facing with regards to Smart Specialisation, which is now an ex-ante conditionality enshrined by the Common Provisions Regulation.



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## Last time - REGI meeting – 30 November - 1 December 2015

### Exchange of views with Commissioner Cretu, Commissioner for Regional Policy



**Corina Cretu**

Commissioner Corina Cretu underlined importance of the European Parliament support especially on the CPR amendment for Greece. Mrs Cretu expressed her wish to continue such a good dialogue and cooperation with the REGI Committee members in 2016. She underlined her priorities regarding cohesion policy contribution to the Juncker Plan putting the focus on the job creation and sustainable growth. Commissioner also pointed out importance of the good cooperation with Member States in order to ensure the best results for the beneficiaries of the cohesion policy. Regarding current migration crisis, Mrs Cretu expressed her support for a larger use of the cohesion funds for the support for refugees. So far only 5 Member States answered to this call.

As for 2016 Commissioner expressed her wish to continue work on the simplification of the Cohesion policy, preparation of the next cohesion policy period and MFF mid-term review. Mrs Cretu expressed her wish as for the effective implementation of programmes with a specific focus on their performance.

In all areas of her portfolio, Commissioner Cretu, wishes to continue an open and transparent dialogue with the MEPs.

### Workshop on financial instruments in cohesion policy



The experts' presentations at the REGI Workshop provided interesting insights into the use of Financial Instruments in cohesion policy, combining ESI funds with loans, bank guarantees or equity. They highlighted the opportunities and challenges of mixing these financial sources and reported about experiences on the ground and in the context of urban development.

The Commission encouraged regional and national actors to increase the use of Financial Instruments, arguing that they enhance the effectiveness and the impact of Structural funds, have a considerable multiplication potential and help mobilising additional public or private investments in the regions.

In the debate with the REGI Members, all participants agreed on the need for simplification of the complex implementation rules when combining Financial Instruments and ESI Funds and stressed the importance of administrative capacities at the operational and management level.

## Ahead of us - REGI meeting – 11 January – 14 January 2016

(\*) agenda of the forthcoming meeting might be changed after publication of the Newsletter

### Exchange of views with Martina DLABAJOVÁ, CONT rapporteur for the discharge 2014



Rapporteur:  
**Martina DLABAJOVÁ (ALDE)**

On 14 January 2016, Martina Dlabajová (ALDE), Rapporteur of the European Commission Budget Discharge 2014, will take part in an exchange of views to discuss the draft opinion issued by Ms Maletić (EPP) on behalf of the REGI Committee.

Ms Dlabajová will address important topics raised in the draft opinion such as increasing error rates, weak financial control systems, and overly complex administration. During her exchange of views with Commissioner Cretu on 7 December 2015, Ms Dlabajová stressed the importance of simplified procedures - a view echoed by the Maletić draft opinion. It is hoped that this exchange of views in January will strengthen understanding and cooperation between CONT and REGI, particularly in the field of simplification.

### Presentation of the priorities of the Dutch presidency of the Council during the first half of 2016



**Ronald Plasterk**  
Minister of the Interior  
and Kingdom Relations



**Martijn van Dam**  
Minister for Agriculture

On January 11 two Ministers/State secretaries (one on cohesion policy and one on Urban Agenda) will visit REGI committee in order to present the priorities of the forthcoming Dutch Presidency of the Council.

During its six months presidency, the Netherlands will bring the cohesion agenda forward without starting or closing any important item in cohesion policy. The Presidency will be implementing already agreed priorities (Urban agenda; Smart Specialisation Strategies; Simplification; Synergies), but will also work towards bringing new possible proposals following the MFF and Europe 2020 midterm review. It should be noted that the EU Urban Agenda - a broad conceptual framework that could include a wide range of topics - will be high on the Dutch agenda.

Therefore, the presidency will define the focus of the Agenda for the next months with the key priority of setting up partnerships. (See for more information: <http://agendastad.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/EU-Urban-Agenda-factsheet.pdf> ; RO Magazine issued a volume on the *EU Urban Agenda: Working together on the future of European cities and promoting European urban success stories*. See for more information: <http://agendastad.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/ROM-special-EAS-ENG.pdf>).

The Presidency is also planning to organise a number of workshops, to draft orientation papers and to formulate concrete proposals on how to proceed in a number of areas.

## Cohesion policy in mountainous regions of the EU

[2015/2279\(INI\)](#)

Opinion: AGRI



Rapporteur:  
**Iliana Iotova (S&D)**

The draft report of Ms Iotova focuses on the development needs the mountainous regions have in the European Union as well as on their potential to become sources of jobs and sustainable growth.

Among other suggestions, the rapporteur calls for a definition of the mountainous regions from the regional policy angle, proposes an Agenda for EU Mountainous Regions which would represent a framework providing additional focus within Cohesion Policy, and pleads for a coordination of EU policies with an effect on these areas.

The draft report will be presented on 14 January, while the deadline for tabling amendments is provisionally set for 26 January. The vote of this report is foreseen for 17 March.

## Exchange of views with Commissioner Cretu, Commissioner for Regional Policy



**Corina Cretu**

On 14 December, the European Commission adopted the [Communication on the Contribution of the European Structural and Investment Funds \(ESI Funds\)](#) so called "Article 16" report.

REGI Committee has organised an exchange of views with Commissioner Cretu, which will be an opportunity for Members to go into deeper detail on all aspects of the contribution of the [European Structural and Investment Funds](#) (ESI Funds) to [the Europe 2020 Strategy](#), the [Investment Plan](#) and the [Commission's priorities](#) over the next decade.

The report also includes the outcomes of negotiations with all Member States on Partnership Agreements and programmes, and [the key challenges per country](#) - one of the key points of interest for REGI Members.

## Upcoming events in Brussels or near to your home

Date		Place	Additional info
11 and 14/01/2016	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	
18/01/2016	Financial Instruments delivering ESI Funds	Lisbon, Portugal	
21/01/2016	Financial Instruments delivering ESI Funds	Ljubljana, Slovenia	
25- 26/01/2016	Launch Conference of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region	Brdo, Slovenia	
28/01/2016 - 29/01/2016	Pilot peer-review workshop on Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies	Seville, Spain	
18/02/2016	3rd Urban Development Network	Brussels	

## Useful internet links

[REGI Website](#)

[EP studies Website](#)

[EP Library - Info on items related to regional development](#)

[OEIL - The Legislative Observatory](#)

[Regional Policy Info regio](#)

[EUR-Lex](#)

[Committee of the Regions](#)