

REGI News

Newsletter of the Committee on Regional Development



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In Focus

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37,5 %

of EU citizens live and work in Europe's border regions.

One third (31%) of them are aware of EU funded cross-border cooperation activities in their region.

(Eurobarometer, 2015)



A word from the Chair



Dear Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

A lot of interesting events have taken place during the last weeks. For those who have not been able to follow our last REGI meetings on 24 and 25 May, you will find a short feedback in this issue.

I would like to highlight the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam on 30 May 2016 at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for urban matters, where a REGI Delegation took part. The document sets out the principles of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

During our next meeting we will host Commissioner Corina Cretu, which will be a great opportunity to receive an update from the Commissioner about the ex-post evaluations 2007-2013, as well as the forthcoming actions of the Commission.

Last but not least, we will have a public hearing on Article 16 report. This is only one part of our programme and I'm convinced that it will be of great interest to all of you.

I'm looking forward to seeing you,

Iskra Mihaylova

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8th Parliamentary term

13 June 2016

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In Focus

[Informal Ministerial Meeting in Amsterdam, 29-30 May 2016](#)



The Dutch presidency of the Council organised a two-day informal ministerial council devoted to the Pact of Amsterdam. Representatives from the Member States, as well as from other EU institutions and organisations, and civil society stakeholders, attended. There was universal support for the Pact of Amsterdam adopted on 30 May. In expressing their support for a new urban agenda for the EU, successive speakers underlined the challenges faced by many cities and towns throughout Europe, such as the provision of affordable housing, the presence of pockets of high unemployment, and longer-term demographic challenges.

Ms Iskra Mihaylova, Chair of the REGI Committee, recalled the European Parliament's support for urban policy and welcomed provisions in the Pact of Amsterdam intended to increase the involvement of cities and towns in the development of EU policies affecting urban areas. The Chair also called upon the European Commission to create a special Urban Envoy with responsibility for promoting greater coordination of the many Union policies which impact urban areas. The exchange of knowledge and reinforcement of best practices, she underlined, are key for the success of the urban agenda: and stronger partnerships and coordination between different levels of government should lead to better regulation. Four partnerships have already been set up - on urban poverty, air quality, affordable housing, and inclusion of migrants - and there were presentations about these.

After the informal ministerial council, Ms Mihaylova took part in a panel discussion which concluded a Forum on the future of urban policy jointly organized by the Committee of the Regions and a large number of urban authorities.

Members of the REGI delegation: Iskra MIHAYLOVA (Chair), Younous OMARJEE, Kerstin WESTPHAL, Lambert VAN NISTELROOIJ, Matthijs VAN MILTENBURG.

[Delegation to Croatia](#)

The REGI Committee was on the road again, this time to Croatia, the EU's newest Member State.

The delegation was chaired by Mr Andrea Cozzolino (S&D - Italy) and, during the last day of the delegation, Mr Lambert Van Nistelrooij (EPP - Netherlands). In total there were 5 Members, from EPP, S&D and ECR.

The aim of the visit was to meet key actors involved in the implementation of cohesion policy in Croatia as well as to have a first-hand view of some of the projects co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds).

Croatia joined the EU in July 2013. It found itself in a unique situation when it comes to ESI Funds: moving from pre-accession funds, 2007-2013 cohesion policy programming period (for only 6 months) to 2014-2020 operational programmes in a rather short time span. This meant significant challenges in terms of adaptations of the implementation systems. In the 2014-2020 period Croatia can benefit from ESI Funds funding of EUR 10.7 billion through its 4 national programmes.

The projects visited were good examples of the added value of cohesion policy for local communities and opportunities it brings by, for example, creating additional cultural/tourism infrastructure as well as by providing basic services such as clean water and reliable sewerage systems.



On a more general note, the visit also confirmed some of the well-known challenges in the implementation of cohesion policy: need for simplification, improving administrative capacity and bottom-up approach with active involvement of local and regional authorities.

Last time - REGI meetings – 24 and 25 May 2016

The European Union Solidarity Fund: an assessment

[2016/2045\(INI\)](#)



Rapporteur:
Salvatore Cicu

The rapporteur presented his first ideas which will echo the Commission report on the implementation of the EUSF in 2014.

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was set-up to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity towards disaster-stricken regions within Europe. The Fund was created as a reaction to the severe floods in Central Europe in the summer of 2002.

All shadows shared the rapporteur's view on the need to shorten the EUSF intervention in the Member States. Delays between application and payments are far too long and they lower effectiveness. There is a need to be quick and at the same time to give enough time to Member States to evaluate damages and apply for EUSF support. Members also pointed out the necessity of disaster prevention.

The draft report will be presented in July and final vote in REGI is expected in September.

Exchange of views with Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness



Jyrki Katainen

European Commission Vice-President, Jyrki Katainen, attended the REGI committee meeting on Tuesday 24 May to discuss the current cohesion policy themes linked with his work. He addressed topics such as EFSI (European Fund for Strategic Investments) and ESIF synergies, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) review, the current state of cohesion policy implementation, the simplification efforts as well as the past and present implications of the refugee crisis has for EU policies and funding.

There was a lively debate as many Members took the floor to ask questions, especially about the EFSI. The multiplier effect, the types of projects receiving funding as well as the services set up to match investors with projects were all discussed during the hour and a half the Vice-President was with the Committee. Mr Katainen said that the [advisory hub](#) can help with the practical side of combining ESI funds and EFSI.

The review of the current funding period as well as what the future holds for cohesion policy were both topics often raised during the discussion. Vice-

President Katainen stated that as there will be no extra funds, he does not think that big changes are possible within the MFF review. When talking about the future, Members stressed that cohesion policy is a modern policy and that it is very much needed in the post 2020 period as well. Members also said that the Commission should produce the proposals for the new funding period as early as possible.

The full debate (the part where Katainen speaks starts at 16:30)
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20160524-1500-COMMITTEE-REGI>

Exchange of views with with Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President of the European Commission for the Euro and Social Dialogue, on the Commission proposal to establish a Structural Reform Support Programme 2017-2020



Valdis Dombrovskis

On 25 May 2016, the REGI committee held an extraordinary meeting where Commission Vice-President Valdis DOMBROVSKIS presented the Commission's legislative proposal to establish a "Structural Reform Support Programme" for the period 2017-2020.

The aim of this new support programme is to strengthen the overall capacity of Member States to prepare and implement institutional, administrative and structural reforms to promote growth and jobs. Support will be provided on request from a Member State and in the context of (i) country-specific recommendations issued in connection with the European Semester process; (ii) economic adjustment programmes; or (iii) reforms that Member States undertake at their own initiative. The major part of the multi-annual budget of this new programme (EUR 142.8 million) will be deducted from the Technical Assistance budget at the initiative of the Commission under the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund.

After the Commissioner's presentation, the REGI co-rapporteurs on this file, Ms Krehl and Mr van Nistelrooij, opened the discussion by raising some key questions related to the budgetary transfer and its effects on cohesion policy in the future. They outlined their intention to progress as quickly as possible with this file, while stressing the need of further clarification by the Commission on a number of issues, in order to allow them to present their draft report at the REGI meeting on 8 September.

In the following lively debate with Commissioner Dombrovskis a large number of REGI members took the floor, as well as the EMPL and BUDG rapporteurs who will provide opinions under rule "53+".

Aspects discussed were among others: the transfer of ESI-funding to the new programme, the wide range of actions to be covered by it, the role of actors at EU, national and local level, the European Semester context and potential links to macro-economic conditionality.

In view of the future of cohesion policy after 2020, the political rationale behind the proposal was at the core of many questions, with several Members stressing the complementarity of objectives between economic, social and territorial cohesion on the one hand and economic governance on the other.

***** VOTED IN THE LAST MEETING *****

During the last Committee meeting, the following texts were adopted (for more information please follow the hyperlink):

| TITLE | RAPPORTEUR |
|--|----------------------------------|
| DRAFT REPORT on "European Territorial Cooperation - best practices and innovative measures" (PE577.064) 2015/2280(INI) | Iskra Mihaylova (ALDE) |
| DRAFT OPINION on "Preparation of the post-electoral revision of the MFF 2014-2020: Parliament's input ahead of the Commission's proposal" (PE580.479) 2015/2353(INI) | Constanze Krehl (S&D) |
| DRAFT OPINION on "How best to harness the job creation potential of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)?" (PE576.886) 2015/2320(INI) | Andrey Novakov (PPE) |
| DRAFT OPINION on "Access to Finance for SMEs and increasing the diversity of SME funding in a Capital Markets Union" (PE580.519) 2016/2032(INI) | Marc Joulaud (PPE) |

Ahead of us - REGI meeting – 15 and 16 June 2016

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

Exchange of views with Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy



Corina Crețu

On 15 May, REGI committee will hold an exchange of views with Commissioner Crețu as part of the regular political dialogue with the Commission. On this occasion, Ms Crețu will discuss with REGI members the latest developments on the EU Urban Agenda, notably the outcome of the recently adopted Pact of Amsterdam.

On 30 May the informal Ministerial meeting on urban matters organised by the Dutch presidency of the Council adopted the "Pact of Amsterdam", which sets out the principles of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

On this occasion, Commissioner Crețu noted that "Cities are hubs of creativity and engines of European growth, but they face major challenges, such as social exclusion, air pollution or unemployment. We need to tackle these problems together. Our commitment to having an Urban Agenda shows that we are putting urban matters higher on our agenda and are ready to listen more to our cities when it comes to what works for them and what needs to be improved."

Commissioner Crețu will also present the results from the ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programming period performed by DG REGIO.

According to the recently published data, income has increased in the poorest EU regions, with GDP per capita growing from 60.5 % of the EU average in 2007 to 62.7 % in 2010; some 2.4 million participants in ESF actions supporting access to employment found a job within 6 months (2007-2010); and 254 800 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) received direct investment aid.

Public hearing on "Evaluating the contribution of the European Structural and Investment Funds" (Article 16(3) CPR)



On 15 June, REGI Committee will organise the public hearing "Evaluating the contribution of the European Structural and Investment funds (art. 16(3) CPR)". This is an important occasion to deepen the scrutiny of the Parliament over the implementation of the cohesion policy.

Article 16(3) of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) requires the Commission to submit a report before the end of 2015 on the results of the negotiations between Member States, their partners, including regional and local actors, and the Commission on the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes. In December 2015, the Commission adopted a Communication fulfilling this obligation (COM (2015)0639, 14.12.2015). The Communication includes, in Annex II, details on each Member State.

This hearing will contribute to the discussion on this topic, from the perspectives of academics, politicians and practitioners in the field. It will also complement

the preparation of an implementation report on the same topic drafted by the EP rapporteur, Mr Lambert van Nistelrooij."

Exchange of views with Jens Geier, rapporteur-general, on the General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2017



Rapporteur:
Jens Geier

On Thursday 16 June 2016 the Members of REGI will have an exchange of views with Jens Geier (S&D), rapporteur of the Committee on Budgets, on the general budget of the EU for the 2017 financial year. Mr. Derek Vaughan (S&D) is the REGI rapporteur for opinion on this matter.

As in the past, the BUDG rapporteur, Mr Geier, wishes to work closely with the committees responsible for individual policy areas. REGI is responsible for cohesion policy which accounts for about one-third of the total Commission budget.

Originally, the meeting was also intended to discuss the Draft Budget, but the presentation of the budget has been postponed by the Commission from the end of May to the end of June 2016.

The exchange of views will, therefore, focus more on the guidelines and strategy of the EP in the budget procedure and on other aspects of the budget.

Presentation of a study on "Services of General Interest in the Funding Period 2014-2020"



The financial and budgetary difficulties that the EU has experienced even before the 2014-2020 programming period had highlighted the essential role played by services of general interest (SGI), both as essential safety nets for vulnerable citizens and as factors of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

These are just a few of the many high-quality analytical conclusions that the PolDep B study "Services of General Interest in the Funding Period 2014-2020" proposes to the reader.

The study that analyses the role that SGI can play in the 2014-2020 programming period, and how the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) framework can impact them will be presented in detail to REGI members on 16 June by Mr Erik Gløersen, Senior Consultant at Spatial Foresight, and who is one of the authors of this work.

The in-depth analysis also shows that the ESIF contributions to improved SGI provision can be strengthened through a focus on capacity building efforts and more integrated territorial approaches.

SGI-related cohesion policy measures can, as a complement to European competition policy, help to build a social market economy in the European Union.

Upcoming events in Brussels or near to your home

| Date | Event Title | Place | Additional info |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|-----------------|
| 15/16 June 2016 | REGI Committee meeting | EP, Brussels | |
| 16/17 June 2016 | 7th European Evaluation Conference "The result orientation: Cohesion policy at work" | Sofia, Bulgaria | |
| 17 June 2016 | Connecting with citizens: Challenges for Cohesion policy communication | CoR, Brussels | |
| 20 June 2016 | Cost effective housing policies in the European Union | CoR, Brussels | |
| 8-9 July 2016 | 7th European Summit of Regions and Cities | Bratislava, Slovakia | |

Useful internet links

[REGI Website](#)

[EP studies Website](#)

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

[OEIL - The Legislative Observatory](#)

[Regional Policy Inforegio](#)

[EUR-Lex](#)

[Committee of the Regions](#)