REGI News

Newsletter from the European Parliament Committee on Regional Development

VII Legislature N. 19 - 14 March 2011

Meeting on
Monday 21 March 2011
15.00 - 18.30
Tuesday 22 March 2011
9.00 - 12.30

Room ASP 3 G 3

In Focus

- ***Votes***
  - ***State of play and future synergies for increased effectiveness between ERDF and other Structural Funds (Mr Stavrakakis' report)***
  - ***Implementation of the Cohesion Policy programmes for 2007-2013 (Mr Mikolášik's report)***
  - ***Objective 3: A challenge for territorial cooperation (Ms Sanchez-Schmid's report)***
  - ***2009 discharge: EU general budget, Section III - Commission (Mr Geier's opinion)***
  - ***Support for rural development by the EAFRD (Mr Matula's opinion)***
  - ***An integrated maritime policy (Ms Estaràs Ferragut's opinion)***
  - ***Innovation Union (Ms Hübner's opinion)***
- ***Public hearing on the Future Cohesion Policy***

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Date of next meeting:
Tuesday 12 April 2011
9.00 - 12.30 and 15.00 - 18.30
Brussels

Comments and subscriptions at
regi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

PART I

Here you will find the topics which will be discussed at the next REGI Committee meeting on 21 and 22 March 2011

The following items will be discussed as foreseen in the draft agenda.
Please note that most committee documents (working documents, draft reports, etc.) are available at our website REGI.

1. Absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds: lessons learnt for the future Cohesion Policy of the EU (Point 4 of the draft agenda)

Since the late 1990s, absorption of Structural and Cohesion Funds has been recognised as a main concern in relation to the implementation of the EU cohesion policy. Many Member States have faced difficulties in absorbing the structural and cohesion funds from the EU budget, especially during the early post-accession years. This INI report should look at the problems, reasons behind and good practices during the current programming period (2007-2013) and draw lessons for the future EU cohesion policy.

In the exchange of views the Rapporteur will present his working document, which briefly describes the purpose and scope of the report. The Rapporteur gives a general overview of the situation, the reasons behind absorption problems and lists several possible solutions that should be analysed in the report. This working document should serve the purpose of initiating a fruitful debate with Members of the Committee on Regional Development. Thus, the working document only includes the initial position of the Rapporteur, which will be further elaborated in the draft report.

The Rapporteur intends to work in close cooperation with the Shadow Rapporteurs as well as with the Draftsperson of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs that will draw up an opinion under rule 50: procedure with associated committees. Furthermore, all Members of the Committee on Regional Development are invited to present their views during the discussion so that the draft report can be enriched with constructive ideas.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Michael Theurer (ALDE)	Consideration of working document: 21/03/2011
Responsible administrator: Monika Makay	Consideration of draft report: 25/26 May 2011 (tbc)
Procedure: 2010/2305(INI)	Planned deadline for Ams: 08/06/2011 (tbc)
	Planned adoption REGI: 11-12/07/2011 (tbc)
	Planned plenary:

2. Financial rules applicable to the annual budget of the Union (Point 5 of the draft agenda)

This Regulation lays down the rules applicable to the establishment and implementation of the general budget of the European Communities. Certain adjustments to the current text (**Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002)** became necessary after the coming into force of the TFEU (Lisbon Treaty). The European Commission's proposal concerns measures to align the legislation with Treaty provisions as well as reinforcing and clarifying the measures dealing with shared management. Through both its committee on budgetary control and the committee on regional development, Parliament has repeatedly called for measures to improve the quality of financial control exercised by Member States over structural fund expenditure and called on Member States to respect their treaty obligations by giving the European Commission a valid, verifiable and conclusive ***Management Declaration of Assurance*** *as to the completeness, accuracy, and veracity of the accounts, the proper functioning of the control systems as well as* the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions and the respect of the principle of sound financial management.

At present Member States appear reluctant to accept the new structures and above all extra high level responsibility for the management of the Union's Funds by supplying such a declaration.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Jan Olbrycht (PPE)	Exchange of views 21/03/2011
Responsible administrator Christian Chopin	Consideration of draft opinion April 2011
Procedure: 2010/0395(COD) - REGI/7/04998	Adoption REGI May 2011
Lead committee BUDG; Rapporteur: Ingeborg Gräßle (PPE)	Vote in lead committee: June 2011

3. European broadband – Investing in digitally driven growth (Point 6 of the draft agenda)

There are about 124 million fixed and 25 million mobile broadband subscriber lines in the EU, which is one of the world leaders in first-generation broadband deployment. World demand for bandwidth has been growing at roughly 50-60 % per year driven by the extension of internet use.

The Digital Agenda for Europe, a flagship initiative of the Europe 2020 strategy restated the objective endorsed by the European Council to bring basic broadband to all Europeans by 2013. By 2020, all Europeans should have access to internet of above 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) and 50% or more of European households have subscriptions above 100Mbps.

The main objective of this Communication is to assist further the actions of national and local authorities. It is presented as a broadband package with the two other broadband commitments made by the Commission in the Digital Agenda action on fast and ultra fast internet. An EU broadband policy should promote concrete measures which could foster investment by, for example, reducing investment costs and enhance infrastructure competition, taking into account that the competitive threat of alternative public and private investors (including local administrations and public utilities) would incentivise investments in Next Generation Access by incumbent operators. Such actions should be coordinated both at EU and national level.

In the exchange of views the draftsperson will present her draft opinion, in which she takes the view that broadband coverage should be a general service. Furthermore she calls on the Commission and the Member States to simplify the conditions of the funding systems in order to increase the amount of support. She considers it also necessary to simplify the rules concerning state aids.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Sabine Verheyen (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 21/03/2011
Responsible administrator: Monika Makay	Planned deadline for Ams: 24/03/2011 (tbc)
Procedure: 2010/2304(INI)	Planned adoption REGI: 12/04/2011 (tbc)
Lead Committee: ITRE; Rapporteur: Niki Tzavela (EFD)	Planned adoption ITRE: 05/05/2011 (tbc)
	Planned plenary: July 2011 (tbc)

4. Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond (Point 7 of the draft agenda)

The Communication of the Commission, entitled "Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond - A blueprint for an integrated European energy network" (COM (2010)677), outlines ideas to provide the EU with a vision of what is needed for making the EU's networks efficient. It puts forward the method of strategic planning to map out necessary infrastructures, decide upon which are of European interest, and provide a toolbox to ensure their timely implementation, including how to speed up authorisation, improve cost allocation and target finance to leverage investment.

Given the important role cohesion policy can play in energy infrastructure, REGI asked the lead committee to prolong their calendar by postponing the vote, to allow for REGI to adopt an opinion. Nevertheless, the timetable remained strict, and the draft opinion will only be available a few days before the meeting, and therefore be considered in English.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Joachim Zeller (PPE)	Exchange of views -
Responsible Administrator: Diana Haase	Consideration of draft opinion 21 March 2011
Procedure: 2011/2034(INI)	Adoption REGI: 12 April 2011
Lead committee ITRE; Rapporteur: Francisco Sosa Wagner (NI)	Vote in lead committee: 26 May 2011

5. The CAP towards 2020: Meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future (Point 8 of the draft agenda)

In his opinion the Rapporteur states his conviction that Europe needs a strong vibrant CAP which will boost development and competitiveness in the global market. More attention should be paid to small holdings which he says should be helped to diversify. Lastly he considers that the disparities which subsist between Member States, and regions justify the maintenance of the present system of funding for rural development.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Czeslaw Siekierski (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 21/03/2011
Responsible administrator Christian Chopin	Deadline for amendments:
Procedure: REGI/7/04955	Adoption REGI:
Lead committee AGRI - Albert Deß (PPE)	Adoption in lead committee:
	Plenary:

6. Parliament's position on the 2012 Draft Budget (Point 10 of the draft agenda)

In the context of the procedure for the Budget 2012 of the European Union - Section III - Commission, the General Rapporteur in the BUDG Committee, Ms. Francesca Balzani, has initiated a process of direct consultations with the specialised committees.

This process is intended to replace the traditional procedure of the guidelines resolution and the visit of the Rapporteur aims at defining the lines along which this year's procedure will be established.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: László Surján (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion:
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Deadline for amendments:
Procedure:	Adoption REGI:
Lead committee: BUDG; Rapporteur: Francesca Balzani	Adoption in lead committee:

7. European system of national and regional accounts in the European Union (Point 11 of the draft agenda)

The Commission has submitted a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council in order to revise ESA 95, aiming at bringing national accounts in the European Union in line with the new economic environment, the advances in methodological research and the needs of users.

ESA is seen as an essential tool for major administrative purposes (e.g. own resources, excessive deficit procedure, structural funds) and for the analysis of the coordination and convergence of Member States' economic policies, providing EU institutions, governments and economic and social operators with a set of harmonised and reliable statistics on which to base their decisions.

As stated in the justification of the draft opinion, COFOG 2-digit reporting of data has not been made compulsory in the draft regulation, which constitutes a significant shortcoming in the ability of the Commission and stakeholders in general to analyse the patterns of public expenditure and its functional breakdown.

Moreover, there is no progress in the possible collection of public expenditure data at NUTS II level despite the cooperation and negotiation with Eurostat throughout the last four years, which will weaken the ability of the Commission and other stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive and reliable analysis of national policies and, in particular, the patterns and trends of public expenditure and public investment at regional level.

The amendments proposed by the Rapporteur are aimed at overcoming these shortcomings.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 21-22/03/11
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Deadline for amendments: TBC
Procedure: 2010/0374(COD)	Adoption REGI: TBC
Lead committee: ECON; Rapporteur: Sharon Bowles (ALDE)	Adoption in lead committee: TBC

8. State of play and future synergies for increased effectiveness between ERDF and other Structural Funds (Point 12 of the draft agenda)

36 amendments were tabled to the draft report State of play and future synergies for increased effectiveness between ERDF and other Structural Funds, to be voted on 22 March. These amendments focus on quite diverse issues, from simplification to decentralisation and the need to strengthen institutional capacity and to enhance a balanced development of rural and urban areas alike. Some amendments focus on the idea of multi-funds programmes and others on the need to further increase synergies with funding instruments in the field of external policy. There is also a proposal to integrate de Cohesion Fund in the ERDF.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D)	Consideration of working document: 01/12/10
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Consideration of draft report: 28/02/11
Procedure: 2010/2160(INI)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/11
	Plenary: 05/2011 (tbc)

9. Report 2010 on the implementation of the Cohesion Policy programmes for 2007-2013 (Point 13 of the draft agenda)

105 amendments have been tabled to the draft report, including amendments directly sent by FEMM committee, in addition 5 opinions adopted an opinion under this own initiative procedure to the REGI implementation report. The Rapporteur will propose several compromises covering a broad list of amendments and key messages in the texts of the opinions, with a view to keep the report coherent, and to avoid a broadening of its original scope.

The amendments deepen the analysis of the delays experienced at the beginning of this programming period, call for more result orientation in the policy and its reporting system, highlight the need for more synergies with other policy instruments, and call for less input and more outcome and result orientation in the next round of reporting exercise.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE)	Consideration of working document: 28/10/2010
Responsible administrator: Diana Haase	Consideration of draft report: 26/01/2011 Deadline for amendments: 03/02/2011
Procedure: 2010/2139 (INI)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
	Plenary: 05/2011 (tbc)

10. Objective 3: A challenge for territorial cooperation - the future agenda for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation (Point 14 of the draft agenda)

European Territorial Cooperation is one of 3 objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy (alongside "Convergence" and "Competitiveness"). This Objective plays a crucial role in the "ever closer union" by reducing barriers between territories and regions to enable them to face together common challenges. Objective 3 targets all the EU's regions, with a funding of 8.5 billion Euros, and its potential in bringing together people represents a truly European added value.

On the 14th February REGI Committee, the Rapporteur (Ms Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid) presented its draft report on European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), the Objective 3 of Cohesion Policy, in which she calls for concrete decisions to be taken on five key issues:

- Strengthening the Objective 3 (such as a stable architecture, raising as a minimum 5% of Cohesion policy budget assigned to objective 3, or revising the 150 km limit rule for coastal and maritime regions within cross-border cooperation),
- Integrating European territorial Cooperation to the mainstream (such as the implementation of multi-regional cross-border operational programmes),
- Adopting a territorial approach for the other Community policies,
- Encouraging the establishment of European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGCT) (such as clarifying their status under national legal systems)
- Simplifying the implementation of ETC (such as an increase in acceptable error rate to 5% and in the technical assistance rate to 8%).

In the debate which followed Members deplored the lack of funds allocated to interregional cooperation and many expressed their support to raise them by 5% of the cohesion policy budget, but stressed that there was no need to create new administrative structures, especially for the macro regions. They went on to query the feasibility of lowering the co financing rate or again the "revolutionary" idea that funds for territorial cooperation should be allocated at EU level on a programme-by-programme basis. Questions were also raised concerning the granting of global grants to EGTCs to enable them to manage structural fund appropriations. It was necessary to facilitate the establishment of EGTCs and where necessary clarify their status.

134 amendments were tabled to this opinion and a set of compromise amendments are under negotiation and may be put forward before the vote on 22 March.

Discrepancies may appear on whether to maintain or not explicit numbers to the main objectives and targets expressed.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid (PPE)	Consideration of working document: 30/11/2010 Consideration of draft report: 14/02/2011
Responsible administrator : Franck Ricaud	Deadline for amendments: 21/02/2011
Procedure: 2010/2155(INI)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
	Plenary: May 2011

11. 2009 discharge: EU General Budget, section III - Commission (Point 15 of the draft agenda)

10 amendments have been tabled to this opinion.

In his opinion on the 2009 discharge, Mr Geier notes that despite the decrease in the error rate Cohesion fund spending still suffers from the highest of all EU payments. He points out that many of these errors concern the infringement of public procurement rules and recommends the continuation of the simplification programme that the European Commission is undertaking. On the question of shared management he points out that Member States have an obligation to provide sufficient information in their Annual Activity Reports to permit the Commission to have reasonable assurance on the legality and regularity of payments. The Rapporteur goes on to call for a common set of rules and standards among Member States authorities involved in auditing and controlling cross-border programmes.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Jens Geier (S&D)	Consideration of an opinion: 14/01/2011
Responsible administrator Christian Chopin	Deadline for amendments: 22/02/2011
Procedure: REGI/7/05152; 2011/2021(BUD)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
Lead committee BUDG; Rapporteur: Jorgo Chatzimarkakis (ALDE)	Vote in lead committee: 28/03/2011

12. Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) n° 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (Point 16 of the draft agenda)

1 amendment has been tabled to this opinion.

In his opinion the draftsman gives strong support to the Commission's proposal. He nevertheless tables three amendments underlining the duty of regional and local administrations to manage the delicate balance between the needs of economic development and the environment with particular regard to Natura 2000. Mr Matula also stresses the importance of training farmers to use broadband. All levels of governance are called on to encourage farmers to make broadband accessible and to set up training facilities.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Iosif Matula (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible Administrator Christian Chopin	Deadline for amendments: 02/03/2011 (tbc)
Procedure: 2010/0266(COD)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011 (tbc)
Lead committee AGRI - Paola De Castro (S&D)	Adoption in lead committee : 12/04/2011 (tbc)
	Plenary: May 2011 (tbc)

13. Programme to support the further development of an integrated maritime policy (Point 17 of the draft agenda)

To this legislative draft opinion, to be voted on 22 March, Members have tabled 36 amendments, which aim in general at strengthening the position of the insular and outermost regions, on one side, and at enhancing the governance position of stakeholders or partners in the context of maritime policy, on the other. Coordination and synergies across policies, instruments and actors are considered essential, and in this context the macro-regional approach is also emphasised as a significant means of cooperation between Member States and regions.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2010/0257(COD)	Planned adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
Lead Committee: TRAN; Rapporteur: Georgios Koumoutsakos (PPE)	Planned adoption TRAN: 12/04/2011 (tbc)
	Planned plenary: June 2011 (tbc)

14. Innovation Union: Transforming Europe for a post-crisis world (Point 18 of the draft agenda)

The REGI Committee held a first exchange of views on this file on its meeting of 26 January 2011, where the draft opinion was presented. The draftsperson stressed that innovation could be addressed most effectively at the regional level and she underlined the responsibility of decision takers. She took the view that non-technological innovation efforts need to be strengthened. Furthermore she underlined the need to detect sleeping innovators and to strengthen the links between EU budget instruments and EIB funding. She welcomed the proposal to launch European Innovation Partnerships and noted that the partnerships and the regional policy instruments addressing these challenges should be better aligned.

42 amendments were tabled to this opinion and a set of compromise amendments are under negotiation and may be put forward before the vote on 22 March.

Amendments highlight inter alia that interventions targeting innovation should form part of regional smart specialisation strategies and that coordination and synergy between cohesion, research and innovation policies and their instruments is necessary. It is pointed out that the business skills of young Europeans should be enhanced. Furthermore attention is drawn to the need of a well-functioning multi-level governance approach and to the importance of differentiating between innovation and research.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible administrator: Monika Makay	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2010/2245(INI)	Planned adoption REGI: 22/03/2011 (tbc)
Lead Committee: ITRE; Rapporteur: Judith A. Merkies (S&D)	Planned adoption ITRE: 12 April 2011 (tbc)
	Planned plenary: May 2011 (tbc)

15. Hearing on the Future Cohesion Policy (Point 19 of the draft agenda)

The Committee on Regional Development will hold a Public Hearing entitled "Future Cohesion Policy" on 22 March. The main aim of the hearing is to discuss with experts from academia, regional associations and national authorities the proposed common strategic framework and development investment partnership contracts, as well as the new system of conditionality and the role of Member States and regions in the design and implementation of a reformed cohesion policy.

The following experts have been invited to the REGI hearing:

- Professor Jacek Szlachta, Head of Strategy and Planning Division, Warsaw School of Economics
- Mr Jussi Yli-Lahti, Director of Regional Development, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland
- Dr Angelika Poth-Mögele, Director of Policy, Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- Mrs Eleni Marianou, Secretary General, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

PART II

Here you will find information on the issues discussed in the last REGI meetings held on 28 February 2011

1. State of play and future synergies for increased effectiveness between ERDF and other Structural Funds (Point 4 of the draft agenda)

The Rapporteur, Mr. Stavrakakis, presented his draft report to the Committee, calling for the strengthening of the coordination of EU funds and programmes, just as the Parliament consistently insisted in several of its resolutions, in order to avoid conflicting policies, contradictory public actions and duplication of resources, which have consequences both for regional effectiveness of public policies and for their national impact.

In the field of synergies between instruments and policies, the separation of the EAFRD from the general framework of Structural Funds should be carefully assessed, and the coordination with the 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities, and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme should be further reinforced, as Parliament has already insisted in the past.

Important elements for coordination are already in place, but these can be further enhanced for the benefit of greater synergies. Synergies and coordination do not imply one size-fits-all solutions. Instead they call for close strategic coordination between instruments, policies and actors in order to produce carefully designed interventions and programmes which take into account the territorial specificities and comparative advantages or special features of each region in an integrated place-based approach.

Mr. Stavrakakis believed that the timing of this report constituted the right framework and opportunity in view of the upcoming negotiations on the future MFF to achieve greater synergies between EU funds and programmes by putting in place an even more far-reaching coordination mechanism. This will have to include taking the current Strategic Guidelines on a new level of strategic planning by establishing a single Strategic Framework and complementing the general framework for EU Cohesion Policy instruments with additional links to other EU related programmes.

In the following exchange of views Members shared the view that Mr. Stavrakakis drafted an excellent report. However, they were shared whether the timing was appropriate raising the concern of prematurity. It was underlined that the participation of civil society organisations

should be encouraged. Attention was drawn to the importance of added value at European level. It was pointed out that the rules should be simplified and subsidiarity should be strengthened. Stronger focus should be put on results. Furthermore, the question of multi-fund programs was raised.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D)	Consideration of working document: 01/12/10
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Consideration of draft report: 28/02/2011
Procedure: 2010/2160(INI)	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
	Plenary: 05/2011 (tbc)

2. Exchange of views with Mr László Andor, Commissioner on Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, on the European Social Fund and the Future Cohesion Policy (Point 5 of the draft agenda)

In his introductory speech Mr. Andor listed the challenges we are facing e.g: preventing the mismatch between the needed and the real qualification as well as social inclusion. He was of the opinion that a robust ESF was a key component of cohesion policy. He pointed out that the key priority of ESF is to deliver the EU 2020 targets. He underlined the need for further simplification of the structural funds.

After Mr. Andor's introduction an exchange of views with questions and answers followed. Members stressed the importance of the local level of ESF. It was pointed out that a more robust ESF did not mean more money in general, but a shift in the framework of structural funds. Nonetheless the Member States want to choose their priorities on their own. It was added that a better coordination of ESF and ERDF would be necessary. Members raised questions inter alia concerning the priorities of ESF and European added value. It was also asked how could be ensured that the regional bodies follow an integrated policy on their own, while there are different organisations for different funds. Members took the view that the idea of the multi-fund approach should be considered. It was stressed that funding should be proactive, not just compensatory. A question was raised concerning possible measures to be taken to improve absorption of the funds. Possible solutions could be direct management, financial structuring, eurobonds. In addition the importance of social inclusion was raised, also because economic growth does not solve the problems and does not always mean more jobs.

3. The following votes took place:

- **Europe, the World's n° 1 Tourist destination – A new political framework for tourism in Europe**
  Draftsperson: Salvatore Caronna (S&D)
  The draft opinion (2010/2206(INI)) was adopted by 32 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

- **Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries**
  Draftsperson: Oldřich Vlasák (ECR)
  The draft opinion (2010/2156(INI)) was adopted by 33 votes in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions.

- **A Single Market for Enterprises and Growth**
  Draftsperson: Sophie Auconie (PPE)
  The draft opinion (2010/2277(INI)) was adopted by 33 votes in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions.

- **Mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund - Floods in 2010 in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Romania**
  Draftsperson: Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE)
  The draft opinion (2011/2021(BUD)) was adopted unanimously by 34 votes.

4. Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) N° 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (Point 14 of the draft agenda)

The draftsman gave strong support to the Commission's proposal. He nevertheless tabled three amendments underlining the duty of regional and local administrations to manage the delicate balance between the needs of economic development and the environment with particular regard to Natura 2000. Mr Matula also stressed the importance of training farmers to use broadband. All levels of governance were called on to encourage farmers to make broadband accessible and to set up training facilities.

In the short exchange of views Members asked whether the amendments tabled would result in a better situation for farmers. In addition it was underlined that environment should not be neglected.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Iosif Matula (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible Administrator Christian Chopin	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2010/0266(COD)	Adoption REGI: 22/03/2011 (tbc)
Lead committee AGRI - Paola De Castro (S&D)	Adoption in lead committee : 12/04/2011 (tbc)
	Plenary: May 2011 (tbc)

5. Innovation Union: Transforming Europe for a post-crisis world (Point 11 of the draft agenda)

The draftsperson stressed that innovation could be addressed most effectively at the regional level and she underlined the responsibility of decision takers. She took the view that non-technological innovation efforts need to be strengthened. Furthermore she underlined the need to detect sleeping innovators and to strengthen the links between EU budget instruments and EIB funding. She welcomed the proposal to launch European Innovation Partnerships and noted that the partnerships and the regional policy instruments addressing these challenges should be better aligned.

In the following exchange of views Members highlighted the importance of an integrated approach and European added value. It was pointed out that the regional level should be encouraged to make stronger efforts. Furthermore it was underlined that innovation should be understood in a much broader sense, it includes e.g. also the way how public services are provided or how a company is managed.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Danuta Hübner	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible administrator: Monika Makay	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2010/2245(INI)	Planned adoption REGI: 21-22/03/2011 (tbc)
Lead Committee: ITRE; Rapporteur: Judith A. Merkies	Planned adoption ITRE: 12 April 2011 (tbc)
	Planned plenary: May 2011 (tbc)

6. Exchange of views with Mr Dirk Ahner, European Commission Director-General on the Cohesion Policy's contribution to the success of the EU 2020 Strategy (Point 10 of the draft agenda)

In his introductory speech Mr. Ahner drew the attention to the fact that the regions determine the success of human capital strategy. He pointed out that a shift in the programs could be observed towards the targets of EU 2020, e.g. energy efficiency. Concerning the post 2013 period he stressed the importance of project pipelines. We should address the question of how to best prepare them already now, so that we lose as little time as possible. The consultation procedure is an important tool in the preparation for the next period; in this regard he drew the attention especially to Jaspers. He took the view that EU 2020 is a broad policy vision; therefore it will be translated into concrete priority fields in autumn. Then the Commission will examine the concrete situation and needs with each Member State and the regions, so that they can choose a limited number of priorities. In this context he highlighted the importance of flexibility. A better coordination is necessary on the one hand between the community instruments, on the other hand between the community and the national instruments. Mr. Ahner raised the question of the multi-fund programs.

Members stressed the necessity of a clear territorial dimension. They raised questions inter alia concerning Erasmus for local and regional authorities and major priorities of regional policy. Members underlined the importance of energy efficiency and stressed that it should be extended to housing. Attention was drawn to the necessity of long-term investments. It was pointed out that the partnership between Member States or regions and the Commission should be binding.

Mr. Ahner agreed that what we change must have a positive effect on the ground. He also stressed the importance of decentralized management. Regional and local level must have the necessary capacities. Concerning Erasmus he outlined the plan of a kind of Summer University for locally elected people. This initiative should start next year.

7. Programme to support the further development of an integrated maritime policy (Point 12 of the draft agenda)

The draftsperson presented her draft opinion which is based upon the fundamental idea that coastal regions are fundamental for economic growth in the European Union and its Member States, considering that there is a need to consolidate the development and the implementation of the Integrated Maritime Policy

The draftsperson supported the Commission’s proposal and took the view that the amount

allocated was sufficient for the objectives being pursued in the last three years of the current multiannual financial framework.

The amendments proposed by the draftswoman intend to ensure a degree of regional balance in the allocation of the funds available and, in general, to fine-tune some of the proposed regulation's objectives in order to bring them into line with those of the Integrated Maritime Policy as such, by clarifying the content of some of the actions eligible for funding and shore up the Commission's responsibility in relation to the territorial impact assessment, and the general supervision and control of the programme's implementation.

After the presentation of the draftsperson there was no possibility for an exchange of views with the Members due to time constraints.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2010/0257(COD)	Planned adoption REGI: 22/03/2011
Lead Committee: TRAN; Rapporteur: Georgios Koumoutsakos	Planned adoption TRAN: 12/04/2011 (tbc)

8. The future for social services of general interest (Point 13 of the draft agenda)

On the basis of the relevant provisions of the Treaties the draftsman deemed that social services of general interest were essential for the accomplishment of the EU2020 Strategy goals.

Emphasising the principle of subsidiarity, Mr. Alves considered that regional and local authorities had a pivotal role to play in the provision of such services, calling for the adequate funding to be provided to them for the appropriate accomplishment of these tasks.

Furthermore, urging the Commission to ensure the establishment of a clear and legally certain legislative framework, the draftsman defended the establishment of a voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services.

After the presentation of the draftsman there was no possibility for an exchange of views with the Members due to time constraints.

PROCEDURE	***TIMETABLE***
Rapporteur: Luís Paulo Alves (S&D)	Consideration of draft opinion: 28/02/2011
Responsible administrator: Carla Carvalho	Deadline for amendments: 03/03/2011
Procedure: 2009/2222(INI)	Planned adoption REGI: 12/04/2011 (tbc)
Lead Committee: EMPL; Rapporteur: Proinsias De Rossa	Planned adoption EMPL: 24-25/05/2011 (tbc)

PART III - Other News

Here you will find the latest news related to Committee activities and cohesion policy issues

Chair's participation on events on behalf of the Committee

Ms Hübner, representing the committee, has accepted so far an invitation to participate (during the coming weeks) in the following events:

31 March	**Sofia, BU**	**Invitation by Polish Ambassador** **Organised together with European Parliament Information Office in Sofia**	**Polish experience in absorption of European funds** **Also opportunity to discuss Future of Cohesion Policy**
31 March - 1 April	**Budapest, HU**	**Hungarian Presidency of the EU in association with the European Commission**	**High Level Meeting on the Future of Cohesion Policy**

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More information is available at the Chair's website http://danuta-huebner.pl/ or with the secretariat.

Library News

Library Briefings

EU strategy for the Atlantic region / Guillaume Ragonnaud, February 2011

The Council has invited the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Atlantic region by June 2011, in the framework of the EU's integrated maritime policy. This briefing presents in 1 page the context, the specific challenges for the region and the European Parliament's view on this issue. It is also available in French language.

Reports, Studies and Articles

De nouvelles ambitions pour la politique européenne de cohésion après 2013: rapport d'information / La commission des affaires européennes, Sénat, France, no 266, janvier 2011, 58 p.

La Commission des affaires européennes du Sénat (France) vient de publier son rapport d'information sur l'avenir de la politique de cohésion après 2013.

Le Sénat souhaite contribuer au débat qui s'ouvre: sa commission des affaires européennes estime qu'il est nécessaire et possible de se donner les moyens d'une politique de cohésion au bénéfice de toutes les régions européennes, malgré l'étau budgétaire européen et national. Elle propose ensuite trois grands principes qui lui paraissent devoir être soutenus par les autorités françaises dans l'élaboration de la future politique de cohésion: équité, efficacité et simplicité.

To roll forward or roll back? Regional Aid Control 2014+ / by Fiona Wishlade, European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, European Policy Research Paper, N° 75, January 2011

The main aim of this paper is to discuss the future of the Regional Aid Guidelines and the extent to which it is feasible essentially to reapply the existing system. Following a brief overview of recent developments in State aid control, the analysis focuses on regional aid control and examines the implications of reapplying the 2007-13 Regional Aid Guidelines for the 2014+ period at the European and national level. At the end, alternative scenarios are put forward and key issues for discussion emphasized.

The Impact of New EU Own Resources on Regional and Local Governments / European Policy Centre, Issue Paper, 16 February 2011

In its EU Budget Review, the European Commission has once again proposed the idea of financing the budget through an EU tax. While it is very unlikely that Member States will want to tackle any question concerning the structure of 'own resources', a discussion on the real EU added value of such a tax is currently needed. In particular, this paper addresses the potential consequences an EU tax could have on territorial entities, highlighting how impacts are likely to be very diversified. After reviewing the main possible options, Fabian Zuleeg and Elisa Molino argue that the introduction of an EU tax would not succeed in solving the 'juste retour' issue or in reducing the alienation of citizens.

Less Poverty, More Employment: Helping the European Union to achieve its 2020 targets / edited by Graham Meadows, September 2010

A study which compares aspects of regional policy in China with cohesion policy in the European Union – financed by the Commission under its EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility - has been carried out in 2008-2010. The study examines the regional policies of the European Union and China to assess their potential to speed the economic growth of regions which are lagging behind. The study is on practical aspects of policy-making and regional development. It concentrates, in particular on: the definition and economic classification of regions; the governance and co-ordination of regional policy; and the role of regional policy in improving competitiveness, sustainable development and urban and rural development. As illustrations, the study report describes examples of best practice in these subject areas in China and the EU.