

REGI News

Newsletter of the Committee on Regional Development



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In Focus

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DIVERSITY: a key word when we speak about regions' size and numbers in the EU, e.g. 6 in Bulgaria, 16 in Poland and in Germany

Chair's Editorial



I would like to welcome you to the newly designed REGI newsletter. We have now been working together for a little over a year and a half: Members of the REGI Committee, colleagues from our political groups and other committees, and interested stakeholders from all Member States and EU Institutions. Many exchanges and achievements have already taken place, and many initiatives are planned for the future. If you are reading these words it is because you are, to some extent, interested in what the European Parliament is doing in relation to Regional and Cohesion Policy.

The purpose of this newsletter is to share with you our discussions and plans for the future, as well as additional important information.

In this edition, you will have an overview of the latest events taking place outside of the EP (the recent delegation to Sicily), as well as a short report from our meeting with our colleagues at COTER. These short reports from past and future meetings will shape a large part of the regular newsletter.

Please let us know how useful you find this newsletter.

Iskra Mihaylova



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In Focus

Delegation to Sicily (23-25 September 2015)

The delegation consisted of 11 Members of the Committee: the Chair of the delegation, Younous OMARJEE, Krzysztof HETMAN, Franc BOGOVIČ, Constanze KREHL, Derek VAUGHAN, Hannu TAKKULA, Andrew LEWER, Monika VANA. They were joined by the local accompanying Members: Michela GIUFFRIDA, Rosa D'AMATO and Salvatore CICU.



The aim of the delegation was two-fold:

- to meet the national, regional and local authorities involved in the design and implementation of ERDF in order to discuss the state of play of regional and national operational programmes based in Sicily for the 2014-2020 Programming Period;
- to visit projects of previous Programming Periods (2000-2006 and 2007-2013) in the field of innovation, research, SMEs and cultural heritage.

COTER / REGI joint meeting (13 October 2015)

The joint meeting of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER, Committee of the Regions) and the Committee on Regional Development (REGI, European Parliament) took place on October 13th 2015 at the Committee of the Regions, within the framework of the 13th Open Days event.

The purpose of this year's REGI-COTER meeting was to discuss, in the presence of representatives from European local and regional authorities participating in the Open Days, the application of the principles of partnership and multi-level governance during the elaboration and implementation of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes, the simplification of Cohesion policy implementation, and to look at the opportunities and challenges for the use of financial instruments within the framework of Cohesion Policy, and the synergies with the Investment Plan for Europe and the European Fund for Strategic Investments.

REGI And COTER members also agreed upon a text named "[Joint statement of REGI-COTER](#) 'towards the Pact of Amsterdam'". The intention of the 'Pact of Amsterdam', a project of the 2016 Dutch presidency, is to create a bottom-up approach where cities are empowered by a direct commitment between the regional and local authorities and the European Commission. This declaration aims to strengthen the partnership between REGI and COTER, and to announce a roadmap towards the EU Urban Agenda (culminating in the adoption of the 'Pact of Amsterdam'). This pact could stimulate the shaping and implementation of an integrated EU Urban Agenda while reinforcing the role of the cities in the EU legislative process.

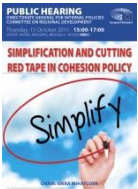
Last time - REGI meeting – 15 October 2015

Exchange of views with Ms Sevil Shhaideh, Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration, Romania



The highlight of the morning session was an exchange of views with Ms Sevil Shhaideh, Minister of [Regional Development and Public Administration for Romania](#). The Minister outlined her firm commitment to continue the modernisation of the Romanian economy and spoke about specific infrastructure projects. She argued for increased complementarity between regional/national and EU bodies, and the need to regard the Juncker Plan as a complement - not substitute - to regional policy. The Minister underlined that Romania's take-up rate was much better (63%) than several years ago: part of the explanation for this might be government provision of up-front bridging finance to end-beneficiaries. REGI Members asked about fraud reduction measures, difficulties in implementation, and support for marginalized communities.

Public hearing - Simplification and cutting red tape in European Structural and Investments Funds



Most of the afternoon session was devoted to a public hearing on simplification of cohesion policy. The four experts gave examples of the problem, and suggested possible solutions. One point to emerge was that the existence of two funds (ESF and ERDF), managed by two different DGs, is widely seen as an obstacle to setting-up multi-fund projects, and that there is no explicit agreement on exactly what simplification means. The Commission suggested that administrative procedures are complicated because the policy itself is complicated. Extensive guidance for beneficiaries and management authorities is the result of the Commission trying to answer all the questions asked by national and regional administrations. However, the administrative burden could be reduced by simplified costs, a reduced audit burden and joint action plans. The Commissioner has set up a High Level Group on simplification, to be launched next week and chaired by ex-Commissioner Kallas.

Presentation of a study: Review of the adopted Partnership Agreements. (REGI/8/04646)



Ms Isabel NAYLON
Metis GmbH

An [external study](#) including a comprehensive analysis of the Partnership Agreements adopted in the 28 EU Member States was presented to REGI members. The implementation of elements endorsed by the European Parliament during negotiations on the legislative framework was highlighted, such as thematic concentration, e-cohesion, and ex-ante conditionalities. Members wanted to know about the regional differences in concentration of the ESI Funds and about the reasons behind the different levels of fulfilment of ex ante conditionalities. It was also discussed whether or not the content of the PAs reflects the implementation of partnership principles in practice.

*** ADOPTED DURING LAST MEETING ***

Cohesion policy and marginalised communities

REGI/8/02313 [2014/2247\(INI\)](#)

Opinions: EMPL, FEMM



Rapporteur:

Ms Terry REINTKE (GREENS)

Cohesion policy legislation provides financial support for deprived communities in urban and rural areas. In particular, physical, economic and social regeneration in both urban and rural areas is within the scope of support of ERDF. The 2014-2020 programming period offers new possibilities for the design and implementation of Integrated Territorial Investment and Community-led local development, targeted at marginalised communities. Some 214 amendments were tabled. The EMPL and FEMM committees issued opinions, and the rapporteur proposed a number of compromise amendments.

Results of the vote :

For: 35 Against: 3 Abstention : 1.

Ahead of us - REGI meeting – 12 November 2015

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

Exchange of views with Mr Phil Wynn Owen, Chamber II, European Court of Auditors, on special report no. 10/2015 (errors in public procurement in cohesion policy)



Phil Wynn Owen

[The European Court of Auditors](#) has issued its [Special Report No. 10/2015](#) entitled "**Efforts to address problems with public procurement in EU cohesion expenditure should be intensified**". EU public procurement policy plays an essential role in the context of implementation of cohesion policy. However, in its audits, the Court has consistently observed failures in complying with public procurement rules in this policy area. The special report assesses whether the Commission and Member States are addressing the problems identified in an effective and appropriate way. Although concluding that the Commission and Member States have started to address the problem, the Court finds that there is still a long way to go. The Court has identified the major issues and is making specific recommendations to both the Commission and the Member States in order to tackle these issues.

Cohesion Policy and Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)

REGI/8/04824 [2015/2278\(INI\)](#)

Opinion: ITRE



Rapporteur:

Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (EPP)

Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) are important elements of the reformed Cohesion Policy 2014-2020. They support thematic concentration and strategic programming of the ESI Funds and lead to an increased performance orientation of their implementation on the ground. Based on each region's relative strengths and opportunities, their aim is to create knowledge-based growth, not only in well-developed areas, but also in less developed and rural regions.

This report will provide a first insight into the main challenges of the implementation of the smart specialisation strategies. Today, a first exchange of views will allow the rapporteur to present his initial thoughts and to discuss them with the REGI Members (and the Commission) with a view to preparing the draft report.

***** VOTES ON THE AGENDA *****

European Investment Bank (EIB) - Annual Report 2014

REGI/8/03639 [2015/2127\(INI\)](#)

Lead: CONT



Rapporteur for the opinion:

Since 2013, the CONT and ECON committees have taken turns to draw up an INI report on the European Investment Bank's annual report. CONT is drawing up the report on the EIB report for 2014.

The role of the EIB Group in the implementation of cohesion policy has increased significantly in recent years and looks set to increase further since the new generation of cohesion policy envisages greater use of financial instruments.

The draft opinion of Mr Jakovčić was presented in the last REGI meeting. 53

Ivan Jakovčić (ALDE)

amendments were received on the basis of which compromise amendments will be proposed and put to the vote.

Annual Report 2014 on the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests - Fight against fraud

REGI/8/03642 [2015/2128\(INI\)](#)

Lead: CONT



Rapporteur for the opinion:
Derek Vaughan (S&D)

In accordance with Article 325 TFEU, the Commission publishes a yearly report on the measures it and the Member States have put in place to protect the EU's financial interests and to fight fraud. The report covers all major policy areas, including cohesion policy. The Committee on Budgetary Control usually draws up an own-initiative report on those annual Commission reports, and, such as in previous years, REGI is this year drawing up an opinion regarding the Annual Report 2014. Our rapporteur, Mr. Vaughan, presented his draft opinion on October 15th, and a deadline for amendments was set for October 22nd. 51 Amendments have been tabled within the deadline and will be put to the vote in the meeting of November 12th.

Recommendations to the European Commission on the negotiations for the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA)

REGI/8/04399 [2015/2233\(INI\)](#)

Lead: INTA



Rapporteur for the opinion:
Monika Vana (Green/EFA)

REGI committee is issuing an opinion to the INTA committee INI report reflecting the position of the European Parliament on the ongoing negotiations on the Treaty in Services Agreement (TiSA). The draft opinion received a number of controversial amendments (65), with the most debated point being the impact of trade in services liberalisation on the quality of public services and on the democratic character of the negotiations. The rapporteur will propose a package on compromise amendments with a view to bringing the parties together. However, a number of amendments on very polarized positions will have to be voted separately.

European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation as an instrument for promotion and improvement of territorial cooperation in Europe

REGI/8/04809

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[The study](#) provides a critical analysis of EGTCs in light of their potential to improve territorial cooperation in Europe. On the basis of a literature review and case studies, the study offers insight into previous achievements of EGTCs, obstacles to their foundation and functioning, as well their future perspectives. Recommendations have been developed to contribute to the opinion-forming process of the European Parliament on general lessons, future potential and possibilities for further improving the instrument.

Upcoming events in Brussels or near to your home

Date		Place	Additional info
12/11/2015	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	
24/11/2015	3rd Urban Development Network	Brussels	
26-27/11/2015	Informal Ministers meetings for Spatial and Regional Planning and Urban Policy	Luxembourg	
30/11 – 01/12 2015	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	
12/12/2015	Seminar on anti-corruption and anti-fraud in relation to the use of European Structural and Investment Funds	Budapest	
11 and 14/01/2016	REGI Committee meeting	EP, Brussels	

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](#)