



---

*Plenary sitting*

---

**A8-0201/2017**

24.5.2017

# **REPORT**

on increasing engagement of partners and visibility in the performance of  
European Structural and Investment Funds  
(2016/2304(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Daniel Buda

## CONTENTS

|  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION .....              | 3           |
| EXPLANATORY STATEMENT .....                                    | 12          |
| OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS.....                       | 14          |
| OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS..... | 18          |
| INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE .....         | 25          |
| FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....          | 26          |

## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### **on increasing engagement of partners and visibility in the performance of European Structural and Investment Funds (2016/2304(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 174, 175 and 177 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (hereinafter ‘the CPR’)<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investments Funds<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2017 on investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2017 on delayed implementation of ESI Funds operational programmes – impact on cohesion policy and the way forward<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 May 2016 on new territorial development tools in cohesion policy 2014-2020: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2015 on towards simplification and performance orientation in cohesion policy 2014-2020<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 November 2016 on results and new elements of cohesion policy and the European structural and investment funds<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled ‘Ensuring the visibility of

---

<sup>1</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 74, 14.03.2014, p 1.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0053.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0055.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0211.

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0419.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press-releases-pdf/2016/11/47244650399\\_en.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press-releases-pdf/2016/11/47244650399_en.pdf).

Cohesion Policy: Information and communication rules 2014 - 2020<sup>1</sup>,

- having regard to the Flash Eurobarometer 423 of September 2015 commissioned by the Commission entitled ‘Citizens’ awareness and perceptions of EU: Regional Policy’<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to the Van den Brande report of October 2014 entitled ‘Multilevel Governance and Partnership’, prepared at the request of the Commissioner for Regional and Urban Policy Johannes Hahn<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the communication plan of the European Committee of the Regions for the year 2016 entitled ‘Connecting regions and cities for a stronger Europe’<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the study of July 2016 commissioned by the Commission entitled ‘Implementation of the partnership principle and multi-level governance in the 2014-2020 ESI Funds’<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to the presentation of the Interreg Europe Secretariat entitled ‘Designing a project communication strategy’<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the report prepared as part of the Ex post evaluation and forecast of benefits to EU-15 countries as a result of Cohesion Policy implementation in V4 countries, commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Economic Development and entitled ‘How do EU-15 Member States benefit from the Cohesion Policy in the V4?’<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) handbook of 2014 entitled ‘Giving a voice to citizens: Building stakeholder engagement for effective decision-making – Guidelines for Decision-Makers at EU and national levels’<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to the study by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies (Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies) of November 2014 entitled ‘Communicating Europe to its Citizens: State of Affairs and Prospects’,
- having regard to the briefing by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies (Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies) of April 2016 entitled ‘Research for REGI Committee: Mid-term review of the MFF and Cohesion Policy’,
- having regard to the Commission summary report of 19 September 2016 on the Ex-post evaluation of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund 2007-2013 (SWD(2016)0318),

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/ensuring-the-visibility-of-cohesion-policy-information-and-communication-rules-2014-2020](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2014/ensuring-the-visibility-of-cohesion-policy-information-and-communication-rules-2014-2020).

<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/COMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/67400>.

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/informing/dialog/2014/5\\_vandenbrande\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/informing/dialog/2014/5_vandenbrande_report.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Documents/CoR-communication-plan-2016.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/policy/how/studies\\_integration/impl\\_partner\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/how/studies_integration/impl_partner_report_en.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/events/Rotterdam/pdf/Designing\\_communication\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/events/Rotterdam/pdf/Designing_communication_strategy.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz/getmedia/fdc8a04e-590d-47ac-9213-760d4ac76f75/V4\\_EU15\\_manazerske-shrnuti.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.strukturalni-fondy.cz/getmedia/fdc8a04e-590d-47ac-9213-760d4ac76f75/V4_EU15_manazerske-shrnuti.pdf?ext=.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.eapn.eu/images/stories/docs/EAPN-position-papers-and-reports/2014-eapn-handbook-Give-a-voice-to-citizens-Guidelines-for-Stakeholder-Engagement.pdf>.

- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinions of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0201/2017),
- A. whereas cohesion policy has contributed significantly to enhancing growth and jobs, and to reducing disparities among EU regions;
  - B. whereas EU cohesion policy funding has a positive impact on both the economy and citizens' lives, as shown by several reports and independent evaluations, but the results have not always been well communicated and awareness of its positive effects remains rather low; whereas the added value of EU cohesion policy goes beyond the proven positive economic, social and territorial impact, as it also implies the commitment of Member States and regions towards strengthening European integration;
  - C. whereas the awareness of local EU-funded programmes among end-users and civil society is crucial, irrespective of the funding levels in a specific region;
  - D. whereas the partnership principle and the multi-level governance model, which are based on enhanced coordination among public authorities, economic and social partners and civil society, can effectively contribute to better communicating EU policy objectives and results;
  - E. whereas a permanent dialogue and the engagement of civil society is essential in providing accountability and legitimacy for public policies, creating a sense of shared responsibility and transparency in the decision-making process;
  - F. whereas increasing the visibility of ESI Funds can contribute to improving perceptions about the effectiveness of cohesion policy and to regaining citizens' confidence and interest in the European project;
  - G. whereas a coherent communication line is essential, not only downstream with regard to the concrete results of ESI Funds, but also upstream in order to make project initiators aware of funding opportunities, with a view to increasing public involvement in the implementation process;
  - H. whereas methodologies for providing information and for the diversification of communication channels should be increased and improved;

### ***General considerations***

1. Emphasises that cohesion policy is one of the main public vehicles of growth that, through its five ESI Funds, ensures investment in all EU regions and helps to reduce disparities, to support competitiveness and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to improve the quality of life of European citizens;
2. Notes with concern that overall public awareness and perceptions about the effectiveness of the EU's regional policy have been declining over the years; refers to Eurobarometer survey 423 of September 2015, in which just over one third (34 %) of

Europeans claim to have heard about EU co-financed projects improving the quality of life in the area in which they live; notes that the majority of respondents mentioned education, health, social infrastructure and environmental policy as important domains; considers that not only the quantity but mainly the quality of projects funded under the ESI Funds and their added value in terms of tangible results are pre-requisites for positive communication; underlines, therefore, that the assessment, selection, implementation and finalisation of projects must focus on achieving the expected results, in order to avoid ineffective spending which could lead to negative publicity for cohesion policy; draws attention to the fact that communication measures must be selected with special consideration for their contents and scope, while reiterating that the best form of advertising is to illustrate the significance and usefulness of the implemented projects;

3. Notes that ensuring the visibility of cohesion policy investments should remain a shared responsibility of the Commission and the Member States, with a view to formulating effective European communication strategies designed to ensure the visibility of cohesion policy investments; notes, in this context, the role of the managing authorities and of the competent local and regional authorities in particular, through institutional communication as well as beneficiaries, as they constitute the most effective interface of communication with citizens by providing information in situ and bringing Europe closer to them; recalls, moreover, that these authorities have the best knowledge of local and regional realities and needs, and that improving visibility requires more efforts for better information and transparency at grassroots level;
4. Underlines that providing visibility for a policy involves a dual process of communication and interaction with partners; highlights, moreover, that, in the context of complex challenges, and in order to ensure legitimacy and provide effective long-term solutions, public authorities need to involve relevant stakeholders during all negotiation and implementation phases of the Partnership Agreement and the operational programmes, in line with the partnership principle; stresses, moreover, the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of public authorities and partners and reiterates the role that the European Social Fund (ESF) can play in this regard;
5. Stresses in this context the uneven progress registered across Member States towards streamlining administrative procedures in terms of the broader mobilisation and involvement of regional and local partners, including economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society; recalls the importance of social dialogue in this regard;

### *Challenges to be addressed*

6. Points to the increase in Euroscepticism and in anti-European populist propaganda, which distorts information on Union policies, and calls on the Commission and the Council to analyse and address their underlying causes; stresses, therefore, the urgent need to develop more effective communication strategies, ensuring citizen-friendly language and aiming to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens, including the unemployed and those at risk of social exclusion, via a variety of media platforms at local, regional and national levels that are capable of conveying an accurate and coherent message to citizens on the added value of the European project for their quality

of life and prosperity;

7. Invites the Commission and the Council to analyse, both for the current framework and for the post-2020 reform of cohesion policy the impact on the perception of EU policies of the measures aimed at strengthening the link with the European semester and at implementing structural reforms via programmes financed by ESI Funds;
8. Acknowledges the limitations of the legal framework as regards ensuring that cohesion policy has adequate visibility; stresses that, as a result, communication on its tangible achievements has not always been a priority for the different stakeholders; considers that the recommended communication activities on tangible achievements should be constantly updated; notes, in this context, the fact that the technical assistance of the ESI Funds does not include a dedicated financial envelope for communication, at either Union or Member State level; stresses, however, the responsibility of managing authorities and beneficiaries to monitor regularly compliance with the information and communication activities, as provided for in Article 115 and Annex XII of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013;
9. Reiterates the imperative of finding a proper balance between the need to simplify the rules governing the implementation of cohesion policy and the need to preserve sound and transparent financial management and combat fraud while still communicating this properly to the public; recalls, in this context, the need to clearly distinguish between irregularities and fraud, so as not to create public distrust in the managing authorities and local administrations; insists, moreover, on the need to simplify and lessen the administrative burden for beneficiaries, without affecting necessary controls and audits;
10. Underlines that it is essential to increase ownership of the policy on the ground, both locally and regionally, in order to ensure efficient delivery and communication of the results; appreciates that the partnership principle adds value to the implementation of European public policies, as confirmed by a recent Commission study; points out, however, that mobilising partners remains rather difficult in some cases on account of the partnership principle being implemented formally but not allowing for real participation in the governance process; recalls that more efforts and resources need to be invested in partnership involvement and in the exchange of experiences through dialogue platforms for partners, with a view, moreover, to making them multipliers of EU funding opportunities and successes;
11. Recalls, furthermore, that the long-term, strategic nature of cohesion policy investments means that results are sometimes not immediate, a situation that is detrimental to the visibility of cohesion policy instruments, especially when compared with other Union tools, such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI); urges, therefore, that communication activities should, where appropriate, continue for another four years after closure of the project; stresses that the results of certain investments (especially those in human capital) are less visible and harder to quantify than 'physical' investments and calls for a more detailed and differentiated evaluation of the long-term impact of cohesion policy on citizens' lives; considers, moreover, that special attention should be paid to the ex-post evaluation and communication activities on the contribution of ESI Funds to the Union's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as the long-term European development strategy;

12. Notes the important role played by the media in informing citizens on various EU policies and EU affairs in general; regrets, however, the rather limited media coverage of EU cohesion policy investments; stresses the need to develop information campaigns and communication strategies that target the media, that are adapted to the current informational challenges and that deliver information in an accessible and attractive form; stresses the need to harness the growing influence of social media, the advantages offered by digital advancements and the mix of the different types of communication channels available, in order to utilise them better when promoting the opportunities provided and achievements delivered by ESI Funds;

***Improving communication and the engagement of partners during the second half of the 2014-2020 period***

13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase the coordination and accessibility of existing communication means and instruments at EU level, with a view to addressing topics that have an impact on the EU agenda; emphasises, in this context, the importance of providing guidelines that set out techniques and methods for communicating effectively how cohesion policy delivers tangible results for the everyday lives of EU citizens; calls on the managing authorities and beneficiaries to communicate the results, benefits and long-term impact of the policy actively and systematically, while taking into account the different project development stages;
14. Points out that, given the quantity and quality of information transmitted on traditional and modern media, it is no longer enough simply to display the Commission logo on project description panels; calls on the Commission to devise more effective means of identification;
15. Welcomes the current specific communication activities, such as the ‘Europe in My Region’ campaign, the Commission’s ‘EU Budget for Results’ web application, the cooperation with CIRCOM Regional<sup>1</sup>, the Europe for Citizens Programme and the opportunities provided by the newly created European Solidarity Corps; stresses, in addition, the key role played by Europe Direct information Centres in decentralised communication, with a view to increasing awareness of cohesion policy impact on the ground, both locally and regionally; stresses, moreover, the need to concentrate efforts on reaching students and journalists as potential communication vectors, and on ensuring a geographical balance in the communication campaigns;
16. Underlines the need to adjust the communication arrangements laid down in the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) 1303/2013; invites the Commission to consider the added value of providing a specific financial envelope for communication within the technical assistance, as well as of increasing, where appropriate, the number of binding publicity and information requirements for cohesion policy projects; calls on the Commission to provide clear guidance in 2017 on how technical assistance could be used for communication in the current funding period, with a view to ensuring legal certainty for local and regional authorities and other beneficiaries; reiterates, furthermore, that the ordinary communication and advertising standards, while well-conceived in the case of structural and technological investments, are not as effective

---

<sup>1</sup> Professional Association of Regional Public Service Television in Europe.



for intangible investments in human capital;

17. Underlines the need to give greater precedence to communication within the hierarchy of EU cohesion policy priorities, especially in the context of the work of management staff not directly responsible for communication, and to incorporate communication into the normal procedure of ESI Funds; calls for further professionalism in the field of communication, especially in going local and avoiding EU jargon;
18. Welcomes the ex-post evaluation of cohesion policy programmes for the period 2007-2013 undertaken by the Commission, which provide excellent sources for communicating the results achieved and impact made; takes note of the initiative of the V4 countries on the externalities of cohesion policy in EU-15<sup>1</sup> and calls on the Commission to draft a broader objective study at EU-28 level; further urges the Commission to differentiate its communication strategies towards net contributor and net beneficiary Member States, and to highlight the specific benefits that cohesion policy brings in terms of boosting the real economy, fostering entrepreneurship and innovation, creating growth and jobs in all EU regions and improving community and economic infrastructure, both through direct investments and direct and indirect exports (externalities);
19. Calls on the Commission and the managing authorities to identify ways to facilitate and standardise access to information, to promote an exchange of knowledge and good practices on communication strategies in order to better capitalise on the existing experience and increase the transparency and visibility of funding opportunities;
20. Welcomes the introduction of e-cohesion in the current programming period, which aims to simplify and streamline the implementation of ESI Funds; underlines its capacity to contribute effectively to accessing information, the monitoring of programme development and the creation of useful links among stakeholders;
21. Considers that there is a need for enhanced communication through new media channels, which will require a strategy for digital and social media platforms designed to inform citizens and give them the opportunity to voice their needs, focusing on reaching end-users through different sets of tools such as interactive online means, developing more accessible mobile-based content and applications, as well as ensuring that information is tailored to different age groups and available in different languages, where appropriate; invites the managing authorities to provide the relevant DGs with up-to-date information on the financial data and achievements and investments, with a view to displaying easily readable data and charts within the ESI Funds Open Data Platform, for the benefit of journalists; calls for the launch of regional award initiatives for the best projects, inspired by RegioStars;
22. Suggests, furthermore, that the monitoring and evaluation of current communication activities be improved and proposes the establishment of regional communications taskforces involving actors across a number of levels;

---

<sup>1</sup> Report prepared as part of the Ex-post evaluation and forecast of benefits to EU-15 countries as a result of Cohesion Policy implementation in V4 countries, commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Economic Development and entitled 'How do EU-15 Member States benefit from the Cohesion Policy in the V4'.

23. Highlights the importance of the European code of conduct on partnership and the role of the partnership principle in enhancing the collective commitment to and ownership of cohesion policy; calls for the link between public authorities, potential beneficiaries, the private sector, civil society and citizens to be strengthened through open dialogue, and for the make-up of the partnership participants to be altered during implementation where necessary, with a view to ensuring the right mix of partners to represent community interests at every stage of the process;
24. Welcomes the innovative model of multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation proposed by the EU Urban Agenda and recommends its replication, where possible, in the implementation of cohesion policy;
25. Highlights the need to enhance the communicational dimension of cross-border and inter-regional cooperation, including at the level of ongoing macro-regional strategies, which should be made more visible for EU citizens, through the dissemination of good practices and of investment success stories and opportunities;

#### *Fostering post-2020 communication on cohesion policy*

26. Calls on the Commission and Member States to boost the attractiveness of EU cohesion policy funding through further simplification and limitation of gold plating, and to consider reducing the complexity and, where appropriate, the number of regulations and guidelines, in the light of the recent recommendation by the High Level Group of Independent Experts on Monitoring Simplification for Beneficiaries of the ESI Funds;
27. Taking into consideration how EU cohesion policy contributes to positive identification with the European integration project, calls on the Commission to consider a compulsory communication field in the project application forms, as part of an increased use of technical assistance through an envelope set aside for communication, at programme level, , while guarding against increasing the number of constraints and ensuring the necessary flexibility; calls, in addition, on the managing and local and regional authorities to improve the quality of their communication on the final results of projects;
28. Highlights the imperative of increasing the Union's dialogue with citizens, of rethinking communication channels and strategies and, given the opportunities offered by social networks and new digital technologies, of adapting messages to local and regional contexts; emphasises, moreover, the potential role of civil society stakeholders as vectors for communication; reiterates, nevertheless, that educational content is as important as media strategies and promotion via different platforms;
29. Emphasises, in the context of communication and visibility, the need for further simplification of the policy post 2020, including with regard to shared management and audit systems, in order to strike the right balance between a policy geared towards results, an appropriate number of checks and controls, and simplified procedures;
30. Calls for the partnership principle to be further strengthened within the framework of the post-2020 programming period; is convinced that actively engaging stakeholders, including organisations that represent civil society, in the process of negotiating and implementing the Partnership Agreement and the operational programmes, could

contribute to enhancing the ownership and transparency of policy implementation and could also entail better policy implementation with regard to the EU budget; calls on the Member States, therefore, to consider implementing existing models of participatory governance, bringing together all relevant societal partners and involving stakeholders in a participatory budgeting process in order to determine the resources allocated for national, regional and local co-financing, where appropriate, with a view to increasing the mutual trust and engagement of citizens in public spending decisions; suggests, furthermore, that participatory outcome assessments involving the beneficiaries and different stakeholders be carried out, in order to gather relevant data which could contribute to boosting active participation and visibility with regard to future action;

31. Further insists on increasing urban-rural cooperation to develop territorial partnerships between cities and rural areas through fully exploiting the potential of synergies between EU funds and building on the expertise of urban areas and their greater capacity in managing funds;
32. Urges the Commission and the Member States to focus, moreover, in their respective communication action plans, on strengthening cooperation among the different Directorate-Generals, ministries and communicators at different levels, and on establishing an overview of target audiences, with a view to developing and conveying messages tailored to specific target groups in order to reach citizens on the ground more directly and inform them better;
33. Stresses in this context the importance of a culture shift, in the sense that communication is a responsibility of all actors involved, and beneficiaries themselves are becoming main communicators;
34. Further asks the Commission and the Member States to strengthen the role and position of pre-existing communication and information networks and to use the interactive EU e-communication platform on cohesion policy implementation, so as to collect all relevant data on ESI Fund projects, allowing end-users to give their feedback on the implementation process and the results achieved, beyond a scant description of the project and the expenditure incurred; takes the view that such a platform would also facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of cohesion policy communication;

o

o o

35. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Committee of the Regions, and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Cohesion policy is the most important investment vehicle of growth of the Union with a budget of 351,8 billion euro, having an impact on all EU regions and citizens. With a major contribution to the economies of the Member States, Cohesion Policy investments alongside national co-financing accounted on average for 15% of total public investment in the EU 28, in certain Member States going up to 60 – 80%.

Cohesion Policy instruments have proved useful and effective tools for channelling the funding to poorer regions and in areas most affected by the economic crisis and investing in key sectors for growth and jobs.

Beside its main role of reducing disparities among EU regions, cohesion policy and the synergy with the research and development funds have significantly contributed to developing the smart specialization platforms, fostering innovation and promoting excellence in all EU regions.

While the main priority of cohesion policy remains providing support less developed regions, it focuses on increasing the growth and competitiveness in more developed regions. Thus, the investments in less prosperous regions provide opportunities for more developed regions.<sup>1</sup>

The EU funding policies have an impact to all EU citizens; nevertheless, the results have not always been well communicated as regards the extent to which ESI Funds investments changed the daily life of EU citizens. Therefore, the report proposes new ways of advertising the results of cohesion policy investments.

In the wake of Brexit and the rise of populism movements throughout Europe, there is a stringent need to rethink communication methods, counteracting the anti-European and Euro-sceptic rhetoric and delivering clear message to citizens, aiming to regain the confidence in the common vision of the European project.

The own-initiative report seeks to scrutinize actual experiences and work on an increased visibility of the structural and investment funds and proposes an approach to link Cohesion Policy instruments with local policies, in order to increase the effectiveness of decisions at the local level through developing participatory governance as an effective tool to increase the visibility of ESI Funds.

Moreover, the report will evaluate how the impact of communication through social media can be increased, given the democratisation of the media content.

The draft report also aims encouraging the public support and involving the local community in decision making, through participatory budgeting, where appropriate, as well as through public consultation and other tools. EU should focus on identifying new ways to increase ownership, vertically and horizontally, putting together all relevant societal partners in all stages related to cohesion policy implementation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/information/cohesion-policy-achievement-and-future-investment/factsheet/en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/information/cohesion-policy-achievement-and-future-investment/factsheet/en.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Multilevel Governance and Partnership – Van den Brande Report, European Commission, 2014.

While there are signs of economic recovery, EU's social crisis continues. Opinions and solutions coming directly from stakeholders involved in local development projects and regular dialogue and engagement with civil society provide accountability and legitimacy to government's policies.

The partners have to assume a common responsibility to a stronger EU and an increasingly more connected world, while the development of 'multi-layered governance' architecture<sup>1</sup> is essential for implementing the EU 2020 objectives.

The beneficiaries of ESI Funds projects shall take up the role of 'ambassadors' of Cohesion Policy.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commission Working Document – Consultation in EU 2020 Strategy COM(2009)647/3.

12.5.2017

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON BUDGETS**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on increasing engagement of partners and visibility in the performance of the European Structural and Investment Funds  
(2016/2304(INI))

Rapporteur: Jan Olbrycht

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Underlines that, although the Common Provisions Regulation defines precisely the information and communication responsibilities of Member States and managing authorities implementing projects cofinanced by the European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds, there are no specific provisions ensuring a financial envelope devoted to such activities at either Union or Member State level;
2. Notes with concern that there is a visible gap between the documented results of cohesion policy interventions and the added value of the policy in general, on the one hand, and the perception and recognition of EU-funded projects on the ground, on the other; believes that this gap needs to be addressed urgently, especially given the increased scepticism regarding the EU that can currently be observed in many Member States; calls on the Commission to allocate an adequate amount of financial resources for expanding the scope of the RegioStars award, with the aim of holding annual competitions to reward the best performing projects at regional level in all Member States; considers that this initiative would allow the best examples of cohesion policy initiatives to obtain media coverage and become known to a wider public;
3. Underlines the potential of the partnership principle in enhancing the ownership of cohesion policy and the commitment to better dissemination of the policy's results;
4. Stresses the need for simplification of the rules governing the implementation of cohesion policy and the need to preserve sound financial management while properly communicating this to the public;

5. Invites the Commission to consider earmarking a dedicated financial envelope for information and communication activities as part of the technical assistance relating to the ESI Funds; considers that the ongoing revision of the Common Provisions Regulation in the framework of the simplification presented as part of the MFF mid-term review/revision package provides an excellent opportunity in this context; calls for national, regional and local managing authorities to adapt their internal structures with the aim of improving their communication capabilities and subsequently making the most efficient use of the funds earmarked for promoting the ESI Funds;
6. Considers that a higher level of stakeholder engagement and visibility with regard to the implementation of the ESI Funds could result in an increased number of project applications submitted by Member States and a subsequent reduction in the under-implementation of the EU budget;
7. Notes, however, that the perception of the ESI Funds will not be improved by information and communication activities alone, but by quantifiable and tangible added value generated by these funds.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 11.5.2017   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                     | +: 30<br>-: 3<br>0: 0   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                       | Jean Arhuis, Lefteris Christoforou, Gérard Deprez, Manuel dos Santos, José Manuel Fernandes, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Monika Hohlmeier, Bernd Kölmel, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Vladimír Maňka, Clare Moody, Younous Omarjee, Pina Picierno, Paul Rübig, Petri Sarvamaa, Jordi Solé, Patricija Šulin, Eleftherios Synadinos, Indrek Tarand, Isabelle Thomas, Inese Vaidere, Monika Vana, Daniele Viotti, Marco Zanni |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>                   | Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Louis Michel, Stanisław Ożóg, Rainer Wieland, Tomáš Zdechovský   |
| <b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b> | Georges Bach, Gabriele Preuß, Claudia Schmidt, Axel Voss  |



## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

| <b>30</b> | <b>+</b>   |
|-----------|--|
| ALDE      | Jean Arthuis, Gérard Deprez, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Louis Michel   |
| ECR       | Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Stanisław Ozóg   |
| GUE/NGL   | Younous Omarjee  |
| PPE       | Georges Bach, Lefteris Christoforou, José Manuel Fernandes, Monika Hohlmeier, Paul Rübig, Petri Sarvamaa, Claudia Schmidt, Inese Vaidere, Axel Voss, Rainer Wieland, Tomáš Zdechovský, Patricija Šulin |
| S&D       | Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Vladimír Maňka, Clare Moody, Pina Picierno, Gabriele Preuß, Isabelle Thomas, Daniele Viotti, Manuel dos Santos   |
| VERTS/ALE | Jordi Solé, Indrek Tarand, Monika Vana   |

| <b>3</b> | <b>-</b>              |
|----------|-----------------------|
| ECR      | Bernd Kölmel          |
| ENF      | Marco Zanni           |
| NI       | Eleftherios Synadinos |

| <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |
|----------|----------|
|          |          |

**Key to symbols:**

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

4.5.2017

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on increasing engagement of partners and visibility in the performance of European Structural and Investment Funds  
(2016/2304 (INI))

Rapporteur: Claude Rolin

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas raising the profile of EU-funded projects can play a key role in combating the shadow economy;
  - B. whereas the high degrees of synergy and significant efficiency gains which could be achieved by raising the profile of the European Structural and Investment Funds could be secured for all EU funds by implementing a similar and hence comparable communication and publicising strategy;
1. Points out that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) comprise five different funds that are geared towards improving European citizens' quality of life; highlights the importance of the ESIF, and in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), which has proved to be one of the most important public tools in promoting growth, jobs and social inclusion and reducing regional disparities, especially with regard to the most vulnerable regions and people; underlines the added value of the ESF and the need to draw up communication plans to ensure better optimisation of the resources invested in its visibility;
  2. Notes with concern that in 2015 only 34 % of Europeans said that they had heard about projects co-financed by the EU to improve the area in which they live and to foster sustainable, inclusive growth and jobs, and that this proportion has remained unchanged

since June 2010<sup>1</sup>, and also that in 2015, 75 % of the people who were aware of the funds said that they have had a positive impact, with only 9 % saying that the impact has been negative; stresses, therefore, that there is an urgent need to improve communication strategies targeting citizens, this being all the more important in these times of challenge owing to nationalism and the spread of negativity about the European project;

3. Calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with the local, regional and national authorities as well as the stakeholders concerned, to monitor regularly that all legal provisions as regards information and communication are being implemented thoroughly in order to ensure transparency and the widespread dissemination of information, through institutional communication, social media and any other type of informal communication, about the achievements of the Funds, paying special attention to groups of beneficiaries in vulnerable positions and the exchange of best practices between authorities and beneficiaries of the Funds;
4. Stresses the importance of EU added value, which is one of the core principles against which spending options at EU level should be assessed; believes in this regard that all ESIF funding must be used in a way that adds value to the work already undertaken by the Member States and not to replace national approaches;
5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the visibility of the ESIF by proposing effective communication and targeted measures which can best illustrate the positive contribution of the ESIF, the European added value of the projects and how the ESIF has positively contributed towards improving the lives of European citizens on the ground, particularly in terms of job creation and social integration, as well as the possibilities offered by the ESF, in particular in terms of social inclusion and employment, through a targeted and detailed institutional communication of results achieved and projects implemented, including information events; recalls the multiplying effect that the active involvement of civil society in the development and implementation of EU grants programmes entails;
6. Draws attention to the growing importance of social media and also the dissemination of anti-European propaganda on the internet; calls on the Commission, the Member States and all stakeholders to make the best use of new communication techniques to increase the visibility of the ESIF; stresses the importance of ensuring citizen-friendly language and suggests increased use of concepts such as ‘simple language’; recommends the more intense use of social media to communicate the successes of cohesion policies and the opportunities related to their use;
7. Recognises the need to take a pedagogical approach with regard to the funds concerned so as to prevent nationalist reactions to an instrument that is based on solidarity with the most deprived regions or with the people who most need that solidarity, such as the unemployed or those at risk of social exclusion;
8. Calls on the Commission to promote partnerships, agreements and initiatives via the networks and communication channels used by the stakeholders who are most closely

---

<sup>1</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 423: Citizens’ awareness and perceptions of EU regional policy.

involved, such as the social partners and NGOs;

9. Calls on the Commission to review the provisions contained in Article 115 of, and Annex XII to, Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 to take account of the specific nature of ESF projects, which mainly focus on human capital, providing in particular the possibility to finance specific dissemination and divulgation of the activities performed and results achieved by actions funded under the ESF, taking into account that the ordinary communication and advertising standards, while well-conceived in the case of structural and technological investments, are not as effective for intangible investments in human capital;
10. Calls on the Commission to reduce the administrative burden, without affecting necessary controls and audits, with a view to ensuring a better absorption rate, in particular for SMEs, micro-businesses and companies in remote rural areas, in order to foster their capacity to create employment and add economic value, and for civil society organisations; emphasises, in that connection, the need to maintain a balance as regards the beneficiaries' reporting obligations and accountability vis-à-vis European taxpayers, so that, in the context of the revision of a fund, sufficient data is available to improve the way in which funding is targeted;
11. Recognises the importance of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, which governs the participation of local authorities, the social partners and other interested parties at all stages of planning, implementation and follow-up with regard to the ESIF; recalls that the partnership principle fundamentally ensures that the programming takes greater account of citizens' needs and involves consulting stakeholders and integrating their input; points out that civil society actors and social partners should be better involved in the development processes from an early stage and that urban and regional stakeholders should play a bigger role in the implementation of the projects to be carried out;
12. Welcomes the better application of the partnership principle in the 2014-2020 ESIF period as compared with the 2007-2013 period and recognises the contribution of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership in this regard; notes, however, that some challenges remain, in particular the difficulty of mobilising all relevant stakeholders and the lack of time to ensure partner involvement; calls on the Commission and the Member States to review the Code of Conduct in this regard and to ensure the full and effective involvement of economic and social partners and bodies representing civil society at all stages in the implementation of Partnership Agreements and programmes, and to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices;
13. Recognises that the ESF has taken on new challenges and that there is a need to step up social dialogue; emphasises the importance of ensuring adequate participation, at EU, national and regional level, of the social partners, thereby facilitating their involvement, in all stages of planning, implementation, supervision and assessment of the use of the ESIF; calls on the Commission to ensure and monitor adequate resources for social partners in this regard, as allocated under Article 6 of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013;
14. Recalls the empowering effect of early-stage funding and pre-financing for projects through the use of ESIF;
15. Underlines the importance of the Tripartite ESF Committee, which facilitates the

administration of the ESF by Member States, and calls on the Commission to consider the creation of similar committees for the other ESIFs in light of the added value created by social dialogue;

16. Stresses the importance of the integration of refugees as an urgent policy matter in the aftermath of the refugee crisis; insists, in this regard, on appropriate allocation of the funds, flexible use of funds, and more appropriate targeting of the risk groups, in order to mitigate the risk of exclusion and social tensions;
17. Calls on the Commission to analyse the real impact of investing EU funds during the previous programming period and to draw specific conclusions regarding the positive and negative experiences as a starting point for adding value to the investment process;
18. Calls on the Commission to adopt instruments able to assess not only the quantity but also the quality of the jobs created, as precarious types of employment without adequate safeguards or contracts that involve the exploitation of workers contribute to a negative perception of the cohesion policies;
19. Believes that one of the greatest challenges is the capacity of regions and partners to use and access EU funding streams; calls on the Member States which have not done so, or which have done so to a lesser extent, to devote an appropriate part of the ESF resources to strengthening the institutional capacity of public authorities and relevant partners in order to ensure in particular an effective partnership and an adequate funding allocation; calls on the Commission to ensure that both the allocated budget of 20 % of the ESF for social inclusion and the minimum guaranteed ESF share in each Member State is fully achieved;
20. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the Member States know the exact finalities of the ESF priorities relating to the partnership involvement, and to accompany them in the realisation of these priorities through the identification and dissemination of best practices; in this context, calls on the Commission to monitor, and to include in the annual implementation report on the ESF programmes, the progress made in the activities carried out in the Member States in this regard, with the purpose of ensuring compliance with the requirement for adequacy of resources;
21. Calls for participatory outcome assessments to be carried out with beneficiaries, local and regional authorities, associations, the social partners and other stakeholders in order to gather relevant data with a view to boosting active participation and visibility with regard to future action;
22. Underlines concerns regarding the exclusion of some regions or municipalities from financing due to the increase in public debt, since this increase usually stems from the activities of the central authorities;
23. Calls on the Member States to ensure a straightforward and transparent management of the ESIF;
24. Stresses that there is a particular need at EU and Member State level to improve simplification for beneficiaries, with more precise targeting to meet their needs; believes, in this regard, that the social partners and stakeholders could contribute to the

identification of both good and bad practices and help in introducing simplification options in their respective Member States; underlines that the simplification efforts should not only target beneficiaries, and calls on the Commission to concentrate its simplification efforts also on those responsible for managing and implementing the Cohesion Policy;

25. Underlines that in order to achieve the impact and the added value of ESIF a 'one size fits all' approach cannot work in practice, and that impact indicators in addition to the quantitative analysis should be introduced; calls for the ESIF to allow for appropriate flexibility in their design in order to allow Member States and partner organisations to implement individualised support in line with local needs, without compromising on audit and control; considers that ESIF should address the specific situations and should take into account different social and economic realities.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Date adopted</b>   | 3.5.2017   |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                                     | +:               45<br>-:               3<br>0:                1   |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>                       | Laura Agea, Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Mara Bizzotto, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Ole Christensen, Lampros Fountoulis, Elena Gentile, Arne Gericke, Marian Harkin, Czesław Hoc, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Agnes Jongerius, Rina Ronja Kari, Jan Keller, Ádám Kósa, Kostadinka Kuneva, Jean Lambert, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Javi López, Thomas Mann, Dominique Martin, Anthea McIntyre, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Emilian Pavel, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Robert Rochefort, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Romana Tomc, Yana Toom, Ulrike Trebesius, Marita Ulvskog, Renate Weber, Tatjana Ždanoka, Jana Žitňanská |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>                   | Georges Bach, Heinz K. Becker, Lynn Boylan, Tania González Peñas, Paloma López Bermejo, Edouard Martin, Tamás Meszerics, Flavio Zanonato   |
| <b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b> | Mireille D'Ornano  |

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

| 45               | +  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>ALDE</b>      | Marian Harkin, Robert Rochefort, Yana Toom, Renate Weber   |
| <b>ECR</b>       | Arne Gericke, Czesław Hoc, Anthea McIntyre, Ulrike Trebesius, Jana Žitňanská   |
| <b>EFDD</b>      | Laura Agea   |
| <b>GUE/NGL</b>   | Lynn Boylan, Tania González Peñas, Rina Ronja Kari, Kostadinka Kuneva, Paloma López Bermejo  |
| <b>PPE</b>       | Georges Bach, Heinz K. Becker, Danuta Jazłowiecka, Ádám Kósa, Jérôme Lavrilleux, Jeroen Lenaers, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Thomas Mann, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier, Marek Plura, Sofia Ribeiro, Claude Rolin, Anne Sander, Sven Schulze, Romana Tomc |
| <b>S&amp;D</b>   | Guillaume Balas, Brando Benifei, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Ole Christensen, Elena Gentile, Agnes Jongerius, Jan Keller, Javi López, Edouard Martin, Emilian Pavel, Marita Ulvskog, Flavio Zanonato   |
| <b>VERTS/ALE</b> | Jean Lambert, Tamás Meszerics, Tatjana Ždanoka   |
| 3                | -  |
| <b>ENF</b>       | Mireille D'Ornano, Dominique Martin  |
| <b>NI</b>        | Lampros Fountoulis   |
| 1                | 0  |
| <b>ENF</b>       | Mara Bizzotto  |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention



## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Date adopted</b>                           | 18.5.2017  |
| <b>Result of final vote</b>                   | +: 34<br>-: 3<br>0: 0  |
| <b>Members present for the final vote</b>     | Pascal Arimont, Mercedes Bresso, James Carver, Andrea Cozzolino, Rosa D'Amato, Tamás Deutsch, Raymond Finch, Iratxe García Pérez, Michela Giuffrida, Krzysztof Hetman, Ivan Jakovčić, Marc Joulaud, Constanze Krehl, Sławomir Kłosowski, Louis-Joseph Manscour, Martina Michels, Iskra Mihaylova, Jens Nilsson, Andrey Novakov, Younous Omarjee, Konstantinos Papadakis, Mirosław Piotrowski, Stanislav Polčák, Terry Reintke, Liliana Rodrigues, Fernando Ruas, Monika Smolková, Maria Spyrali, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, Monika Vana, Matthijs van Miltenburg, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Derek Vaughan, Kerstin Westphal, Joachim Zeller |
| <b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b> | Daniel Buda, Viorica Dăncilă   |

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

| 34        | +   |
|-----------|---|
| ALDE      | Ivan Jakovčić, Iskra Mihaylova, Matthijs van Miltenburg   |
| ECR       | Sławomir Kłosowski, Mirosław Piotrowski   |
| EFDD      | Rosa D'Amato  |
| GUE/NGL   | Martina Michels, Younous Omarjee  |
| PPE       | Pascal Arimont, Daniel Buda, Tamás Deutsch, Krzysztof Hetman, Marc Joulaud, Andrey Novakov, Stanislav Polčák, Fernando Ruas, Maria Spyraki, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, Joachim Zeller, Lambert van Nistelrooij        |
| S&D       | Mercedes Bresso, Andrea Cozzolino, Viorica Dăncilă, Iratxe García Pérez, Michela Giuffrida, Constanze Krehl, Louis-Joseph Manscour, Jens Nilsson, Liliana Rodrigues, Monika Smolková, Derek Vaughan, Kerstin Westphal |
| Verts/ALE | Terry Reintke, Monika Vana  |

| 3    | -                           |
|------|-----------------------------|
| EFDD | James Carver, Raymond Finch |
| NI   | Konstantinos Papadakis      |

| 0 | 0 |
|---|---|
|   |   |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention