

**Question for oral answer O-000005/2017  
to the Commission**

Rule 128

**Iskra Mihaylova**

on behalf of the Committee on Regional Development

**Subject:** Delayed implementation of European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds operational programmes - Impact on cohesion policy and the way forward

Owing to the late conclusion of the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework (MFF) negotiations and the ESI Funds regulations, there are significant delays in the implementation of operational programmes, the designation of managing, certifying and auditing authorities and project implementation at local and regional level. The magnitude of the delays resulted in a nearly 24 % decrease in payment appropriations under Heading 1b in the 2017 draft EU budget as compared with the 2016 EU budget appropriations. Delayed implementation already led, in 2016, to a proposed reduction in payments under Heading 1b by EUR 7 billion through draft amending budget (DAB) No 4/2016.

564 ESI Funds operational programmes had been adopted by September 2016, and authorities had been designated for 334 programmes. Execution of interim payments equalled EUR 11.5 billion. The submission of new payment applications in 2016 reached EUR 10 billion. Outstanding payment claims for the programming period 2007-2013 totalled EUR 3.9 billion.

The Committee on Regional Development (REGI) underlines the need for an implementation action plan in the first quarter of 2017. On the basis of the implementation reports to be made available by the Commission by the end of 2016, we propose a debate on this action plan, with a view to receiving answers to the following questions:

1. Is the Commission considering forms of further flexibility such as the proposed reflow of decommitments, including from Heading 1b, as a result of total or partial non-implementation, into the EU budget?
2. Will it maintain an adequate payments plan until 2023 and propose increasing payment ceilings, if necessary, until the end of the current programming period?
3. Given the challenges that lie ahead, how will it deploy the needed technical assistance and advisory services to managing, certifying and auditing authorities with a view to facilitating and speeding up implementation of the policy on the ground?
4. Is it prepared to continue the discussion on these issues in the Cohesion Forum and to come forward with solutions in the 7th Cohesion Report, while also taking the necessary steps to ensure the timely start of the post-2020 period?

Tabled: 24.1.2017

Forwarded: 26.1.2017

Deadline for reply: 2.2.2017