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Committee on Regional Development

2008/2055(INI)

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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Budgets

on the Mid-term Review of the 2007-2013 Financial Framework
(2008/2055(INI))

Rapporteur: Rumiana Jeleva

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SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Considers that, for many years, EU regional policy has demonstrated to the European public its unique European added-value by effectively promoting economic and social cohesion across the EU, whilst at the same time contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs; opposes, therefore, any attempt to re-nationalise this Community policy; reiterates its long-standing position that cohesion policy should relate to the whole of the territory of the EU and that the larger part of the financial resources available should be concentrated on the needs of less-developed regions;
2. Considers it indispensable that adequate funding be guaranteed for the period after 2013, so as to enable cohesion policy not only to continue carrying out successfully its traditional tasks, but also to deal with a number of new global challenges with significant territorial impact, such as climate and demographic change, energy efficiency and urban concentration, as detailed in the Commission's Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (COM(2007)0273); therefore takes the view that the allocation of 0.35% of the EU's GDP will be insufficient to finance this policy;
3. Stresses the need to simplify the procedures for the implementation of Structural Funds, especially the management and control systems; notes that the complexity of the system is to a certain extent responsible for the poor absorption by the Member States of the available resources; urges the Commission to present without further delay concrete proposals for simplifying relevant procedures which should be implemented immediately;
4. Notes that the Commission has for the first time engaged in a systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the 2000-2006 operational programmes; awaits with great interest the results of this evaluation, which is a serious attempt to measure the effectiveness of cohesion policy actions; notes, however, that it is extremely difficult to fully appreciate the positive effects that cohesion policy has had in reality, as they cannot be measured in purely economic terms;
5. Acknowledges that the current financial crisis has significantly changed the economic and financial situation in many Member States; notes that, as a result of this crisis, national investment priorities may change and, for that reason, several operational programmes might need to be adapted; underlines the fact that Member States may also face liquidity problems that prevent them from ensuring the payment of national contributions towards the implementation of structural actions and programmes; urges the Commission to work closely with the Member States in a joint effort to re-launch the European economy; also calls on the Commission to propose changes to the existing legislative framework for the Structural Funds 2007-2013, where necessary;
6. In the context of territorial cohesion, recommends significant reinforcement of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective in both policy and financial terms and suggests that extra funding be ensured for the next programming period; welcomes the

Commission's recent efforts to strengthen territorial cooperation by creating trans-national cooperation structures for countries that face similar problems; notes with great interest the Baltic Sea strategy, which shows that similar strategies might also be considered for other regions in the future;

7. Recalls that, during the negotiations for the Regulations on Structural Funds 2007-2013, Parliament put forward in the context of an informal trilogue, a proposal for the reallocation of unspent resources that are lost because of the N+2 / N+3 rule to the Community cohesion budget (Heading 1b) and to other operational programmes with a better record of absorption; greatly regrets that this proposal was not considered at the time by the Council; calls on the Commission, in its forthcoming mid-term review, to respond to Parliament's proposal and to make specific proposals for the reallocation of these resources.