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[Publication](#) | 24.11.2014

Delays in the start-up of cohesion policy for 2014-2020

Greens/EFA motion for resolution

The European Parliament,

- 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,
 - having regard to Council Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 1311/2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002,
 - having regard to Draft Amending Budget No 3 to the General Budget 2014 ([COM\(2014\)0329](#)),
 - having regard to the sixth Commission report on economic, social and territorial cohesion of 23 July 2014 entitled ‘Investment for jobs and growth: Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities’;
 - having regard to the question for oral answer to the Commission on delays in the start-up of cohesion policy for 2014-2020 ([O-000082/2014](#) – B8-0042/2014),
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the sixth cohesion report underlines that cohesion policy has contributed significantly to mitigating the halt in investment during recent years, particularly in those Member States which have been hit the hardest by the crisis, and continues to be the EU’s most important investment policy for economic, social and territorial cohesion;
- B. whereas the adoption of the legislative framework for the funding period 2014-2020 was delayed and

Member States hesitated to speed up the preparation of the programming process;

C. whereas, according to the latest information available, all partnership agreements and only a few operational programmes have been adopted to date;

D. whereas the Commission has announced to apply to those operational programmes which are still 'ready for adoption' at the end of 2014 a carry-over procedure which will allow for the 2014 commitments to be carried over to 2015, provided that 2014 amounts are committed up to 31 March 2015;

E. whereas the Commission intends to propose that Article 19 of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) Regulation be applied to those operational programmes which are not ready for adoption at the end of 2014 in order to re-budget the unused 2014 allocations for European Structural and Investment Funds;

F. whereas, additionally, Member States and regions are confronted with the problem that the Commission may not be able to honour outstanding payment claims from the 2007-2013 funding period in due time, thus creating further obstacles in making use of committed moneys and undermining the credibility of the EU;

G. whereas budgetary conciliation intended to facilitate a solution to the payment shortfall recently failed, thus prolonging the underfinancing of the EU budget;

H. whereas, at the same time, the Commission has announced that it will present a proposal for an investment package;

1. Stresses the important role of cohesion policy as the EU's main tool for investment in jobs and the real economy, aligned with the Europe 2020 objectives;
2. Congratulates the Member States and regions concerned which managed to finalise the adoption of their operational programmes before the end of 2014, so that investments for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth may be made;
3. Agrees with the Commission that quality must not be sacrificed for speed; stresses the need for high-quality programmes and projects in the fight against fraud;
4. Is concerned about the significant delay in starting up the implementation of programmes and projects;
5. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and the regions to further increase their efforts in adopting operational programmes while ensuring that all requirements are duly met, and to start implementation without further delay;
6. Calls on the Commission to analyse the consequences of the delayed start-up of cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020 on jobs, the real economy and environmental and climate protection, to make recommendations based on the lessons learned for the start of the next funding period post-2020 and to publish a communication on its findings and conclusions, also detailing the main problems and obstacles encountered in the various Member States;
7. Fears that part of the 2014 allocations will be lost due to the delay encountered and will not be available for urgently needed investments in the regions; calls on the Member States to do their utmost to keep the loss to a minimum by agreeing as soon as possible and jointly with Parliament on the re-budgeting of 2014 appropriations in accordance with Article 19 of the MFF Regulation;

8. Encourages the Member States, as a short-term measure, to make use of bridge loans in order to accelerate the implementation of operations; calls also on the Commission to facilitate the process in cooperation with the European Investment Bank;
9. Is seriously concerned about the ever-increasing payment gap and the failure of budgetary conciliation, and urges the Member States to take responsibility and enable the Commission to honour outstanding payments for the 2007-2013 funding period in the required timeframe;
10. Calls on the Commission to increase its efforts to facilitate the implementation of a fully functioning cohesion policy which plays an important role in contributing towards meeting the investment needs of the EU and solving the budgetary problems and limiting the damage related to EU investment opportunities;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the other relevant institutions

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