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How the EU can work better for citizens and the climate

Greens/EFA proposals to improve cohesion policy

Now more than ever, it is vital that the EU shows how it can clearly and directly improve the lives of people across the continent. That is why it is so important that the EU takes the correct steps in strengthening its Cohesion Policy.

What is the Cohesion Policy?

The European Union Cohesion Policy is the main investment policy of the Union. It supports smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and reduces inequalities by targeting regions for funding and investment. For the Greens/EFA, cohesion policy is a fantastic expression of EU unity and solidarity. It reduces inequality and improves the well-being of citizens, regardless of where they live. It is a commitment to help each other, to cooperate with each other and to learn from each other.

Why are we talking about it now?

The European Commission is currently holding the 7th Cohesion Forum, which will be critical in preparing for the future of cohesion policy post-2020. It comes at an important time, closely following the Commission's March 2017 White Paper on the Future of Europe, which sent an alarming signal for the future of cohesion policy.

The paper outlined five possible directions that Europe could go in, directions that the EU could decide were best for the Union. These directions are referred to as "scenarios". In scenario 4, 'Doing less more efficiently', cohesion policy (described as "regional development") is mentioned as one of the areas where EU interventions are "perceived as having more limited added value, or as being unable to deliver on promises". The suggestion seems to be that Europe may start looking at cutting back on these investments, which would be a massive blow to the idea of a Europe that invested in all of its people and grew together.

So what are the Greens/EFA proposing?

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. We just need to build on the positive achievements of the past few years. Continue engaging more with citizens and local stakeholders, continue sustainable urban development, and continue pushing for gender equality and non-discrimination. A bigger share of the cohesion budget should be set aside to help reach the targets set in the Paris Agreement. We need to bring cohesion policy closer to citizens and make it more transparent, putting more money into supporting local

projects and initiatives and reinforcing the partnership principle. This will give ordinary people a stronger role in how the EU builds their community, and by doing make them more in favour of the EU.

We should not use cohesion policy as a punitive tool or as political leverage to force Member States to conduct neoliberal structural reforms.

If we want to look at where we can make savings in the budget, let's focus on tackling corruption and stop financing things that aren't sustainable, like airports, motorways and fossil fuels infrastructure.

Ultimately, European cohesion policy should reduce the negative effects of borders and pave the way for bringing people, administrations, businesses and academia together. The policy should aim to make Europe more sustainable place, where clean energy and environmental protection are at the forefront. Most importantly, the Cohesion Policy must fulfil its original purpose and bring investment to the parts of the EU that need it the most. By showing the European people that the EU can do good in their communities, we can help halt the rise of right-wing populism while making ordinary people's lives better.

To read more, see our [key demands to make cohesion policy work for the citizens and the climate](#) or our [Position Paper on the future of Cohesion policy post-2020](#).

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