

## Parliamentary dimension

### 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

OF THE COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND REGIONAL POLICY  
OF THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE **VISEGRÁD GROUP** COUNTRIES  
WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE RELEVANT COMMITTEES  
OF THE **SLOVENIAN** AND **CROATIAN** PARLIAMENTS

**WARSAW, 28 - 29 JANUARY 2013**

**MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Information text on  
the negotiations of the legislative package for the cohesion policy 2014-2020**

#### **Negotiations of the legislative package for the cohesion policy, also in the context of the ongoing negotiations of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020**

- Negotiations of regulations for the cohesion policy were launched on the day of their publication by the European Commission, 6 October 2011, during the Polish Presidency.
- The Polish Presidency had thus the honour to open the negotiations of the strategic and legislative framework of one of the key European Union development policies. The official presentation of proposals for cohesion policy regulations for 2014-2020 took place on 11 October 2011 during the meeting of the General Affairs Council. **Under the Polish leadership, the negotiations focused on four thematic negotiations blocs, i.e., strategic programming, thematic concentration, conditionality and territorial development instruments.**
- The most important new element of the **strategic programming**, directed at a more integrated approach, means that the proposed Common Strategic Framework will cover, apart from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF), also the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The discussions about this thematic bloc often revolved around the issue of practical mechanisms that would bind cohesion policy with the Europe 2020 strategy and the European semester. Many states stressed that they should have the opportunity to adjust the partnership agreements to their national specific conditions and multi-layered governance structures. The opportunity to prepare operational programmes concerning several funds was assessed positively.
- Member States supported the idea of **thematic concentration** and the introduction of a set of thematic objectives as a way of facilitating the result-targeted measures, which would result in increased effectiveness and efficiency of the policy.
- Member States supported further strengthening of the **territorial scope** of the cohesion policy and the introduction of some specialised territorial development instruments. However, some delegations voiced doubts as to whether the diversity of territorial

development instruments would not lead to the fragmentation of interventions under the cohesion policy.

- The application of **ex ante conditionality** – which guarantees that before the launching of financing certain preliminary conditions are met, allowing for more efficient interventions – will contribute to a better implementation of the cohesion policy. Member States agreed with this approach, at the same time indicating that the rules of proportionality and subsidiarity must be borne in mind. The majority of the EU Member States expressed their support for the introduction of the mechanism of **performance framework**, but the performance reserve and possible financial sanctions for insufficient performance caused some anxiety. Finally, both mechanisms were adopted by Member States.
- The European Commission's proposal concerning the **macroeconomic conditionality** divided the Member States – some of them are in favour of the utilisation of a part of the EU budget for supporting the economic governance system and see the relationship between cohesion policy and macroeconomic conditions, while others believe that macroconditionality cannot be reconciled with cohesion policy objectives. The final shape of this element will be adopted during the negotiations of the 2014-2020 MFF.
- The objective of the Danish and Cypriot presidencies was the adoption of positions of all Member States in all negotiation blocs and the launching of negotiations with the European Parliament under the so-called trilogues.
- During four meetings of the General Affairs Council (24 April, 26 June, 16 October and 20 November 2012), **the partial general approach** was successfully adopted in **19 negotiation blocs** – strategic programming, ex-ante conditionality, management and control, monitoring and evaluation, eligibility, major projects, thematic concentration, financial instruments, income-generating projects and PPP, performance framework and assessment, territorial instruments, financial issues outside MFF, European Territorial Co-operation, technical assistance, information and communication, governance and control, indicators, Council recommendations for individual Member States, financial management and Common Strategic Framework.
- For the general position to be adopted, the partial agreement needs to be accepted concerning regulations' articles on final provisions, definitions, implementing acts and delegated acts. These blocs are being discussed in January 2013. Their final adoption by the Member States at the General Affairs Council meeting is planned for the beginning of February.
- The adoption of the complete position of the EU Council **will allow for the initiation of official negotiations with the European Parliament**, though informal meetings between the Cypriot Presidency and EP Members from the REGI and EMPL committees have been held since the beginning of October. They are expected to finish at the end of the Irish Presidency.
- The **Joint Declaration of the Visegrad Group countries and Slovenia**, adopted by ministers at the meeting held on 12 October 2012 in Katowice, contains among others a call for the fastest possible conclusion of Council negotiations and negotiations with the European Parliament and the preparation of delegated and implementing acts.
- The swift completion of the negotiation process over the package for cohesion policy after 2013 will allow for closing negotiations over the Partnership Agreement and

operational programmes early enough **for the programmes to be launched on 1 January 2014.**

- Without waiting for the full completion of negotiations of the regulations, **the majority of Member States have already launched the programming process**, developing initial assumptions for the use of cohesion policy funds: the structure of operational programmes, institutional system and competence division.
- The Partnership Agreement and operational programmes are the most important among documents **preconditioning the launch of European funds' implementation in the new financial perspective 2014-2020.** The Polish Partnership Agreement is to be prepared on the basis of Objectives that are awaiting adoption by the Council of Ministers (planned for 15 January 2013). **Following the acceptance by the government, the Partnership Agreement will be negotiated with the European Commission and finally accepted by way of an implementing act by the European Commission.** The adoption of Objectives for the Partnership Agreement by the government will also mean the formal opening of works on the preparation of operational programmes (the task of the future managing authorities).
- Due to, among others, ongoing negotiations over the package of regulations for funds under the Common Strategic Framework (their final result will directly translate into the provisions of the Partnership Agreement and solutions adopted for operational programmes) and the lengthy process related to arrangements with key stakeholder, i.e., ministries, regions, social partners, and to negotiations with the Commission, **the programming period will probably finish in 2014 r.**

### Cooperation to date with Visegrad Group countries and Slovenia

- The cooperation carried out so far with Visegrad Group (V4) states in the area of cohesion policy has been very satisfying.
- During the period of Poland's leadership in V4, which started in July 2012, as many as 9 meetings have been organised at working and political levels, including:
  1. Meeting of Directors General of Visegrad Group states and Slovenia in Warsaw on 17-18 September 2012
  2. Meeting of ministers of Visegrad Group states and Slovenia in Katowice on 11-12 October 2012
  3. Conference *Effective Instruments Supporting Territorial Development – experiences of the regions in the implementation of regional policy in V4 countries and in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia* in Krakow on 18-19 October 2012
- The meetings are an excellent platform for information and experience exchange between experts and decision makers at regional and central levels.
- Apart from these meetings, regular ongoing cooperation of V4 and SI is carried out in the framework of negotiation process concerning the regulations for the 2014-2020 cohesion policy. The cooperation consists in consulting the positions on individual negotiation blocs and proposing jointly developed solutions during the meetings of Council working groups.