

## OPEN LETTER FROM THE CPMR TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND TO THE COUNCIL OF THE EU

*“A Cohesion Policy based on strong partnership principles with regions at its core”*

In the next few days, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union will hold negotiations on the articles of the proposal laying down the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) for the European and Structural Investment Funds (ESI funds) related to partnership, multilevel governance and the Partnership Agreement.

The CPMR has always defended a strong multi-level governance arrangement in partnership with regions as the core of the EU cohesion policy governance<sup>i</sup>. In this sense, the recently agreed position of the Council of the EU on these matter for the 2021-2027 programming period<sup>ii</sup> gives the CPMR great cause for concern.

The position of Member States stands for a much weaker view on partnership and multi-level governance. According to the Council position, Member States with less than EUR 2.5bn of ESI funds<sup>iii</sup> or with less than three operational programmes for the 2021-2027 period do not have to prepare a Partnership Agreement. In addition, the Council position does not specifically consider regional authorities as relevant partners.

***We ask the co-legislators to take the following messages and the proposals for amendments from the CPMR into account ([see Annex](#)) to safeguard partnership and multi-level governance mechanisms for the post-2020 Cohesion Policy.***

## **1. The core principles of Cohesion Policy, such as shared management, partnership and multilevel governance, must be maintained**

A framework involving regional and local authorities is essential to make Europe visible at local and regional level and to increase regional ownership of EU priorities.

**The CPMR has asked for Article 6 of the CPR on ‘Partnership and Multilevel Governance’ to clearly establish regional and local authorities as partners, and to ensure their involvement on the preparation and implementation of operational programmes and the partnership agreement itself.** Their participation should be in line with the European Code of Conduct on Partnership for ESI funds.

## **2. The partnership agreement should be drawn up together with regional authorities to guarantee that regional and local actors are at the core of the programming process**

The exceptions envisaged by the Council on Article 7 of the CPR ‘Preparation and submission of the Partnership Agreement’, would allow 9 Member States to avoid setting up a Partnership Agreement<sup>iv</sup>. Far from delivering simplification in a number of Member States, such exceptions would lead to a significant number of Member States without an investment strategy for the ESI Funds, and with no clear definition of the role of regional authorities within the governance framework.

**The CPMR has asked for the need to establish a flexible framework as a strategic document for all Member States, to facilitate the coordination of ESI funds from different administrative levels, with sufficient leeway for regional authorities in relation to planning, governance and the targeting the funds in line with their own regional development strategies.**

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## ANNEX I: CPMR amendments

### Article 6 – Partnership and multi-level governance

1. For the Partnership Agreement **and for each programme**, each Member State shall organise **a fully-fledged effective** partnership with the competent regional and local authorities. That partnership shall include at least the following partners:

**(a) regional and local authorities;**

(b) urban and other public authorities;

(c) economic and social partners;

**(d) bodies representing civil society, environmental partners, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, rights of persons with disabilities, gender equality and non-discrimination.**

2. In accordance with the multilevel governance and partnership principles, the Member State shall involve partners **mentioned in paragraph 1** in the preparation of Partnership Agreements **and progress reports** and throughout the preparation and implementation of programmes including through the participation in monitoring committees in accordance with Article 34.

3. The organisation and implementation of partnership shall be carried out in accordance with the European code of conduct on partnership (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014, **and fully respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Commission shall safeguard the principles of partnership and multilevel governance during the whole programming and implementation period.**

4. At least once a year, the Commission shall consult the organisations which represent the partners at Union level on the implementation of programmes **and shall report to the European Parliament and the Council on the outcome.**

### Article 7 – Preparation and submission of the Partnership Agreement

1. Each Member State shall prepare a Partnership Agreement which sets out arrangements for using the Funds in an effective and efficient way for the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2027.

2. The Member State shall submit the Partnership Agreement to the Commission before or at the same time as the submission of the first programme.

3. The Partnership Agreement may be submitted together with the relevant annual National Reform Programme.

4. **The Partnership Agreement shall be drawn up by Member States in cooperation with the partners referred to in Article 6 and** in accordance with the template set out in Annex II. **The Partnership Agreement shall be prepared in dialogue with the Commission and be based on procedures that are transparent for the public, and in accordance with the institutional and legal framework of the Member States.** It may include the Partnership Agreement in one of its programmes.

5. Interreg programmes may be submitted to the Commission before the submission of the Partnership Agreement.

<sup>i</sup> [“CPMR proposals for a strong and reformed post-2020 Cohesion Policy”](#), June 2017.

<sup>ii</sup> Council of the EU, [“Cohesion Policy Legislative Package 21-27 – Partial mandate for negotiations with the European Parliament”](#), p. 9-10, 18 December 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Resources from the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the ESF+.

<sup>iv</sup> List of Member States that would receive less than EUR 2.5bn from the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the ESF+ according to the European Commission cohesion policy allocation proposal (2021-2027): Belgium, Denmark, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden.