



**COUNCIL OF  
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## **Council takes first hurdle towards new EU cohesion policy**

The Council took today<sup>1</sup> the first step towards the adoption of new rules for EU cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 period by agreeing on a partial general approach ([8207/12 REV 2](#) + [8207/12 ADD 7 REV 1](#)).

The purpose of cohesion policy is to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the EU's various regions.

The Council's partial general approach is aimed at strengthening results orientation and improving the quality of cohesion spending. It also seeks to contribute to the integration of cohesion policy in the economic governance of the EU.

Care has been taken to ensure that the partial general approach does not prejudge the outcome of negotiations on other elements of cohesion policy or on the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020 or financial regulation.

The partial general approach may however be subject to change as a result of these other negotiations.

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<sup>1</sup> The decision was taken at a meeting of the General Affairs Council.

**P R E S S**

The Council's compromise text covers some of the more technical features of the future cohesion policy. Work on the more political elements will continue. Some of these are dealt with in the negotiations on the MFF.

More concretely, the partial general approach includes the following elements:

- programming, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 1 REV 2](#). Common programming rules are envisaged for the five funds covered by a common strategic framework, namely the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). Each programme has to specify how it contributes to the EU's 2020 strategy for jobs and growth. The question whether the link between the EU strategy for jobs and growth on one hand and cohesion policy on the other should be assured through country-specific recommendations or national reform programmes has been left open. The Council will come back to it in June.
- ex ante conditionality, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 2 REV 2](#). Ex ante conditionality means that certain conditions must be met before funding may start. It is aimed at improving cohesion policy performance ([9014/12](#)).
- management and control, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 3 REV 2](#). The partial general approach provides for specific rules for the management and control of funds disbursed.
- monitoring and evaluation, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 4 REV 2](#). This part of the partial general approach makes sure that the implementation of the cohesion policy programmes is duly monitored and evaluated.
- eligibility, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 5 REV 2](#). The financing of already completed projects, which is possible under the current rules, would be excluded under the partial general approach.
- major projects, as set out in [8207/12 ADD 6 REV 2](#). The Council's compromise text would facilitate the deployment of "upstream" quality reviews by independent experts of major projects. This is considered to be more effective than the existing approvals "downstream" by the Commission.

Further discussions will be held at Council level in the coming months. The new cohesion policy rules are closely linked to the MFF negotiations; they are only expected to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council once an agreement on the MFF has been reached.