



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 9 December 2014
(OR. en)

16641/14

FSTR 71
FC 50
REGIO 134
SOC 861
AGRISTR 71
PECHE 585
CADREFIN 136

"I/A" ITEM NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council
Subject: Presidency synthesis note on cohesion policy programme

Delegations will find in the Annex a Presidency note on the main achievements of the Italian Presidency programme for cohesion policy to be presented to the Council on 16 December 2014.

PRESIDENCY NOTE**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this note is to present, at the end of the Italian Presidency, the main achievements of the implementation of the Presidency programme for economic, social and territorial cohesion.

II. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

2. An Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for cohesion policy was held in Milan on 10 October 2014. It was focused on the complementary link between cohesion policy and economic governance, as reinforced by the regulatory framework for 2014-2020 period. There was also broad support for regular and formal political debates on Cohesion policy to ensure complementarity and cooperation with EU economic governance, to be held within **General Affairs Council (GAC)** dedicated to cohesion policy.
3. The Italian Presidency has therefore promoted a political debate within a formal setting of the Council of the EU, taking into account the importance of such a debate for the effective implementation and result orientation of cohesion policy. This objective has been reached in the framework of a session within the **General Affairs Council (GAC)** dedicated to cohesion policy held on 19 November 2014, which generated the following concrete results.
4. The Council:
 - a) adopted Conclusions on the Sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion issued by the Commission;
 - b) had an exchange of views on the contribution of cohesion policy to the mid-term review of Europe 2020 strategy;

c) discussed the state of play of the adoption of the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes for 2014-2020.

5. The Council Conclusions on the Sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion take stock of previous policy achievements, especially in the context of the economic crisis, and set clear orientations with regard to the implementation of the reformed cohesion policy and its support to investment for growth and jobs. The conclusions highlight as well that EU economic governance and cohesion policy may have a positive correlation. It is indeed the cooperation between the policy and the broader economic policy that would ensure the effective delivery of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Against this background, and taking also into account the new reporting and monitoring requirements established by the 2014-2020 ESIF regulatory framework, the Council Conclusions recommend that a regular debate in the **General Affairs Council** takes place among relevant ministers to discuss the implementation and results of the ESI Funds.
6. The Council also had a specific exchange of views on the contribution of cohesion policy to the preparation of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy. The debate confirmed the importance of cohesion policy in the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy. Among others, Ministers signalled the need for cohesion policy to be more involved also in the implementing mechanisms of the Europe 2020 strategy, in particular in the earlier stage of the European semester. Such an involvement would ensure a more effective contribution of cohesion policy to the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy goals. They also recalled that the revision of the Europe 2020 strategy should take into account the programming experience and the strengthened connection of cohesion policy to economic governance.

III. THE WAY FORWARD

7. The Commission and Member States largely expressed their appreciation for the Presidency's initiative to organise a session of the General Affairs dedicated to Cohesion policy, which allowed to deal effectively with a number of substantial related issues as set out above. The incoming Latvian Presidency was therefore invited to follow-up on the Italian Presidency practice and to ensure that a regular debate on Cohesion policy can continue to take place within the **General Affairs Council**, as recommended by the Council Conclusions on the Sixth Report on Economic, Social, Territorial Cohesion.

8. This would allow Ministers to address upcoming important issues such as: Europe 2020 strategy mid-term review, the link between cohesion policy and the Commission Investment Plan, the reflections on the Commission reporting and on the outcomes of the negotiations on the Partnership Agreements and the Operational Programmes, the implementation of the reinforced link between cohesion policy and the economic governance.
