Open letter to the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission on the Partnership principle in the Common regulation

Object: Cohesion policy – Play the card of partnership

Dear Madam,
Dear Sir,

In October 2011 the European Commission published a set of legislative proposals for a new Cohesion Policy based on the principle of partnership. We welcome this positive proposal which underlines the need for an effective involvement of public and private stakeholders in the cohesion policy and territorial development in Europe.

Based on the feedback of our member organisations, governance is key for a full use of cohesion funds and quality of supported initiatives. As European organisations we strongly support the partnership and the *"multilevel governance"* principle which is the right way forward for an efficient Cohesion Policy. We consider it necessary to implement partnership with all socio-economic and civil society stakeholders in the framework of a "multi-actors governance" at every level. Our experience shows that without this genuine cooperation Cohesion Policy will fail - or at least will not reach the expected results.

Against this background we have high concerns about the on-going trend towards a dilution of this partnership principle, the decrease of socio-economic and civil society stakeholder's participation and the deletion of the Code of conduct. We strongly disagree with the proposal to restrict the partnership to "inter-institutional governance". Moreover, we consider that this principle cannot be limited to consultations with socio-economic and civil society stakeholders. Regional plans and national partnership contracts must be designed and implemented along the principle of a "multi-level and multi-actors" governance model and that the full stakeholder's participation must be part of the *ex ante* conditions.

We therefore request that the original Commission's proposals on the full participation of the relevant partners in the partnership contracts and progress reports, the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes as well as in the monitoring committees and steering committees become compulsory and are specified in the Code of conduct.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasise that socio-economic and civil society partners must have access to technical assistance in order to ensure not only the strengthening of their capacities but also their coordination and representation in the ad hoc committees and decision making procedures. These are crucial in the definition and implementation of the operational programmes at all levels. They also should have access to training and continuous information.

We thank you for your attention and trust that you will take our recommendations into account to ensure a successful Cohesion Policy for the 2014-2020 period.

Yours Sincerely,

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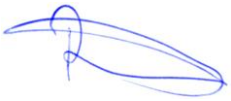
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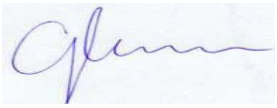
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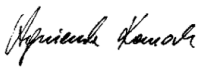
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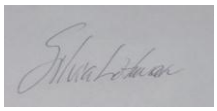


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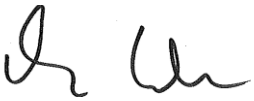
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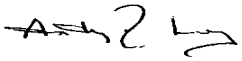
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