

Power Regions of Europe

For a modern
Cohesion Policy 2028+

Brussels, 4th March 2026

Recalling the first Power Regions of Europe Summit in Brussels dated 20th of November 2024, we as strong and innovative regions in Europe renew our shared will today to be key partners of the EU institutions in the further negotiations on the future framework of EU funding and programs 2028+.

We have taken note of the European Commission's proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) dated 16th of July 2025 and 3rd of September 2025 and are closely following the debate within the (European) Council and the European Parliament. With this 2nd declaration, we - as Power Regions of Europe - renew our common, strong and clear pleas for the future design of Cohesion Policy. We call on all EU institutions to involve regions even closer into the debate and into all future steps of the preparation of a renewed, strong and modern Cohesion Policy 2028+ – fully respecting and legally ensuring the pivotal role, the significant responsibility, strength, competences and achievements of the regions in Europe. Our innovative regional industrial ecosystems contribute to Europe's competitiveness and sovereignty through knowledge, skills and innovation.

The Power Regions support the greater framework of dialogue offered by the EUregions4cohesion initiative. It addresses specifically the need to strengthen those regions that stand for a large part of the innovative and economic power of Europe required to keep the EU prosperous, independent and resilient.

A RING-FENCED EUROPEAN COHESION BUDGET FOR ALL REGIONS

We emphasize the importance of an appropriate, fixed and ring-fenced Cohesion budget for all EU regions. Currently, such a legally binding guarantee is only foreseen for less developed regions, but not for more developed regions and transition regions that stand at the core of the EU's new agenda

and priorities on competitiveness, strategic autonomy, and global leadership.

There are substantial reasons for Cohesion Policy to support those areas most in need or faced with geographic or demographic disadvantages. At the same time, it is also vital to keep strengthening those regions that contribute most to Europe's economic leadership and fiscal power. Power Regions play a central role in turning EU priorities into concrete results. Achieving Europe's industrial, social, green and digital transformation requires the full involvement of the most innovative and competitive regions as co-partners. This means providing them with financial means to drive these transformations, while protecting them from economic shocks and crisis. They also continue to face persistent subregional disparities and specific territorial challenges. The Power regions' capacity to lead is a strength that the EU must leverage.

A mere safeguard model, as suggested by the Commission last November, does not address our concerns and pleas in a sufficient manner. It includes neither a fixed or ring-fenced budget nor other reliable, legally binding safeguards. A ring-fenced budget provides regions with long-term planning security, which is indispensable for multi-annual infrastructure, innovation, and industrial transformation projects. Without a guaranteed envelope, regions face uncertainty that discourages strategic investments and undermines the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy.

Additionally, Member States could even read this model as a blueprint on how to legally cut Cohesion funding for more developed regions and transition regions in their National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP).

We therefore insist on reliable, legally binding safeguards also for us as Power Regions – based on a fixed, sufficient and ring-fenced Cohesion budget for all category of regions.

A POWERFUL COHESION BY EMPOWERED REGIONS

We send our clear warnings when it comes to the model of the NRPP and thus to the proposed centralisation of Cohesion Policy.

The current NRPP model does not foresee any legally binding obligation for the national level to implement multilevel governance and a place-based decentralised policy with regions at the very centre. This approach weakens Cohesion Policy by transforming it from a truly European regional policy into a mere national one. Powerful Cohesion Policy requires duly empowered regions to remain locally anchored, targeted and efficient.

We therefore call for five COHESION POLICY 2028+ GUARANTEES:

- 1. Cohesion Policy 2028+ must entitle regions to uphold their competences.** Cohesion Policy must continue to be negotiable directly between the Commission and the regions and continue to be implemented directly by the regions, through regional programs (as an option if desired by the regions concerned), including regional-sectoral programs, in line with a European strategic framework. Regions must have a recognised and guaranteed role across all phases of the design and implementation of Cohesion Policy.
- 2. Cohesion Policy 2028+ must entitle regions to fully continue their existing governance structures and institutions.** Being the most proven Cohesion Policy experts, Europe must preserve these valuable assets.

3. **Cohesion Policy 2028+ must be ready on time.** Due to the radical shift proposed, there is a serious risk of lengthy negotiations and a belated start of the implementation. Should funding shortfalls occur, it is clearly up to the EU and national level to compensate the regions.
4. **Cohesion Policy 2028+ must remain independent and strong.** The integration of several different funds into a new Single Plan will create competition between the various funds and could lead to additional complexity. Given their particular importance, we are therefore in favour of ensuring an appropriate, fixed and ring-fenced European Cohesion budget.
5. **Cohesion 2028+ must clearly reduce red tape.** The proposed NRPP model endangers the very functioning of Cohesion Policy. In many Member States the development of NRPP governance structures would be excessively complex, while stripping regions of their powers, particularly in the case of regions with legislative powers.

FINANCIAL SOUNDNESS AND NO GOLDEN REINS

We are well-aware of the proposed linking of the disbursement of funds to performance requirements. In this regard, we reject any extension of the European Commission's competences beyond what is foreseen by the EU Treaties. Furthermore, we cannot agree to linking EU reimbursement to reforms or pre-defined milestones, if these fall outside the remit of the regions or the underlying measures or if they have been established without our prior involvement and consent. For the sake of a coherent system, in line with the general objective of performance orientation, controls and audits in the multi-level system should focus clearly on the achievement of milestones/targets/results in the future. It must be made clear that the un-

derlying costs and supporting documents are not to be reviewed. The European Commission is asked to clarify and harmonize foci and standards to be applied across programmes for avoiding gold-plating and for securing legal certainty for all actors involved.

Furthermore, we call for a financial framework that enables regions to implement Cohesion Policy properly. Co-financing rates should be increased where necessary to ensure effective programmes. The member states and implementing regions must be given the legal possibility to set their own output indicator. Annual budget allocations and the delays for spending must be set realistically, and reimbursement based on real costs must remain possible where appropriate to avoid unsustainable budgetary risks for regions and pursue stimulating innovative and complex operations. As strong and innovative regions of Europe, we hereby renew our shared commitment to act as key partners of the EU institutions in the forthcoming negotiations for a modern Cohesion Policy 2028+.



Government of Åland

Åland | Finland

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BOZEN - SÜDTIROL



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DI BOLZANO - ALTO ADIGE

PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DE BULSAN - SÜDTIROL

**Autonomous Province of
Bolzano/Bozen-South Tyrol | Italy**



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Baden-Württemberg | Germany



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Die Landesregierung
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North Rhine-Westphalia | Germany



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Norrbotten | Sweden



RÉGION
Nouvelle-Aquitaine

Nouvelle-Aquitaine | France



Region Örebro län

Region Örebro County | Sweden



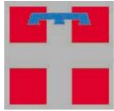
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of Ostrobothnia

Ostrobothnia | Finland



Päijät-Hämeen liitto
The Regional Council of Päijät-Häme

Päijät-Häme | Finland



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Pilsen Region | Czech Republic



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Satakunta | Finland



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SACHSEN**

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Region Stockholm | Sweden



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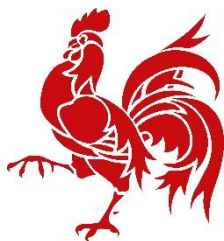
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WIELKOPOLSKA

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