



## "No cohesion without representation!"

***Call for action of the #CohesionAlliance to give regions, cities and municipalities full partnership rights in the future cohesion policy 2028-2034 and to oppose its nationalisation and centralisation.***

As elected representatives of regions, cities and municipalities all over Europe, gathered in the #CohesionAlliance, we call on the European Parliament and Member States to revise the proposed reform of Cohesion Policy as laid out in the 16 July European Commission package for the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

Cohesion Alliance partners consider the MFF proposal as inadequate for addressing the persisting cohesion gaps and for fostering the competitiveness and the resilience needed to meet current and future challenges. Bundling Cohesion policy together with other policies to support agriculture and rural development, defense, or migration means that local and regional authorities would compete for financial support at national level, against farmers, fishermen, law enforcement forces, large private enterprise and many others. While all these objectives and components of society must be supported, the Cohesion Alliance calls for a place-based approach, where local and regional governments are in the driving seat of local or regional economic, social and territorial development.

By transferring the center of gravity of decision-making from regions to capitals, the proposal marks a seismic shift in the role played by Cohesion policy as a linchpin instrument for supporting long-term EU policy objectives and investments at territorial level. Instead, it foreshadows a short-term framework with stronger 'strings attached' conditioning investments to structural reforms.

## The Cohesion Alliance partners:

1. stress that the European Union's (EU) local and regional authorities are strategic partners for the strategic planning, the management and the implementation of EU investments under the 2028-2034 period, as they are already responsible for more than half of public investment in the EU1. As a European policy, access to Cohesion policy as well as its preparation, negotiation, implementation and monitoring should not be left solely to the discretion of national authorities;
2. highlight that the next MFF must be accessible to every territory in the EU for the Union to meet the objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion set in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and respect both multilevel governance and the partnership principles;
3. recall that cohesion policy is the EU's most important long-term instrument to invest in job creation, competitiveness, knowledge, climate action, sustainable development, infrastructure development and fostering social inclusion, based on regional and place-based strategies;
4. reject the proposal for National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPP), insofar as it would lead to renationalisation of cohesion policy as well as agricultural and rural development policy, whilst putting all the sectoral policies covered by the NRPP in competition; therefore calls for stronger guarantees on effective multi-level governance mechanisms;
5. call for reinstating EU-level guarantees for funding for all regions under Cohesion policy, including for transition and more developed regions, so that they can be empowered to develop place-based policies and strategies fit to their specific needs, capacities and vulnerabilities in terms of competitiveness, climate action, job creation, and infrastructure development;
6. highlight that the 2028-2034 MFF proposal risks aggravating the democratic deficit and undermining trust in the EU institutions due to the foreseen lack of oversight by the European Parliament and national or regional parliaments;
7. urge co-legislators to revise the future MFF in order to move towards a more decentralised approach empowering subnational authorities to manage funds effectively ensuring genuine partnerships to build a resilient and prosperous future for all EU citizens. The established shared management model must be maintained and the principles of multilevel governance must be meaningfully reinforced.