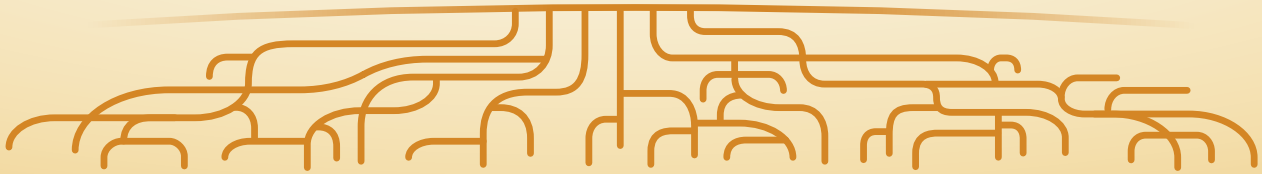


#CohesionAlliance

FOR A STRONG EU COHESION POLICY



Joint Call

A renewed Cohesion Policy post-2027 that leaves no one behind

We, elected representatives of regions and cities all over Europe, call on the European institutions and on national governments to devise a comprehensive EU agenda which puts the strengthening of social, economic and territorial cohesion at its very core.

We share common objectives: ensuring sustainable prosperity and wellbeing for all in an increasingly digitalised society; achieving climate neutrality and preserving biodiversity; and addressing the consequences of demographic change. Such a transformative agenda requires political leadership and an integrated vision at, and between, every level. The green deal and the digital agenda should together remain the EU's compass. However, their design and implementation require greater consideration of local circumstances, because local and regional authorities are at the forefront of this daily battle, and they are responsible for almost half of public investment in EU Member States. Their role is essential in making the green and digital transitions a success.

Cohesion Policy is the glue that keeps Europe together and has the capacity to mobilise and involve everyone on a path towards a better quality of life for all, leaving no one behind, wherever they live and no matter where they are born. We are convinced of its indispensable added value, including its capacity to mitigate risks of increased territorial and social divide between and within EU Member States.

We therefore call for Cohesion Policy to remain a fundamental pillar of the EU development model and the core long-term, decentralised investment policy within the post-2027 EU Multiannual Financial Framework. At the same time, Cohesion Policy should retain sufficient agility to respond to unforeseen developments.

To properly answer current and future challenges, we advocate a renewed Cohesion Policy for the post-2027 period, based on the following principles:

- 1) A policy available to all regions, cities and municipalities. All "territories" matter, whether they are located in richer or in poorer countries.** This remains a sine qua non for ensuring a smoothly-functioning single market for all Europeans. It is essential for the EU to remain united, while strengthening its global leadership and competitiveness. Cohesion Policy should be the main EU policy that puts the provision of local and regional, resource-efficient, public services at its core and supports local public investment for the benefit of all.
- 2) A policy that helps to anchor social, economic and territorial cohesion within the new green deal industrial policy and the strategic autonomy of the EU.** More than ever the EU needs to tackle the development traps many areas have fallen into, in every corner of Europe. A renewed cohesion policy should be conceived as a powerful instrument which aims to unleash the economic potential of every single part of the EU and to promote place-based innovation in the broadest sense of the term.

- 3) **A policy driven by the overarching goal of "just transition": the transformational path towards climate neutrality will impact every single area, regardless of characteristics. It could lead to further disparities and uneven social consequences if not properly managed.** All areas have different strengths, degrees of potential and administrative capacities to cope with this transformation. Some are more vulnerable than others. We will need to pay special attention to those regions that are highly dependent on energy-intensive industries, bearing in mind however, that all industries have an environmental footprint. We call for a renewed post-2027 Cohesion Policy that supports tailor-made solutions, based on the "just transition" principles and available to all regions in every corner of Europe.
- 4) **A policy that builds on place-based solutions: the diversity of territories in the EU is an asset.** From sparsely populated areas to those with severe, permanent or natural handicaps, from cities and metropolitan areas to rural areas, from peripheral, island, coastal, cross-border, mountain and outermost regions to those located in the centre, all are confronted with the challenges of the twin green and digital transitions and demographic change. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. A well-designed Cohesion Policy must be flexible enough to enable the local level to develop strategies adapted to their particular area while fulfilling the EU's overall political objectives, within a stable and predictable framework. Territorial instruments such as Community-led local development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) are indispensable tools for developing such inclusive and place-based action.
- 5) **A policy that builds upon its golden principles: shared management, strengthened partnership with all parts of society, multi-level governance based on genuine dialogue between local, regional, national and EU authorities.** We call for steps to overcome the current fragmentation of Cohesion Policy funding and to devise a stronger common framework based on synergies and complementarities of funds under shared management.
- 6) **A policy based on a new culture of trust between the different layers of government in the EU.** Such a renewed approach would contribute to a more positive image of the EU. The European Commission should launch wide-ranging consultation and an assessment of the simplification measures undertaken since the 1990s, including a comparison with other EU programmes. Cohesion Policy should be valued in terms of its actual impact on Europeans' lives, rather than on the pace at which funds are disbursed.
- 7) **A policy that strengthens territorial cooperation and supports territorial innovation and democracy.** Cohesion Policy has proven its outstanding value in supporting cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation and macroregional strategies to deliver concrete improvements in people's daily lives. Partnerships for regional innovation and smart specialisation strategies provide opportunities for fostering a socio-economic and inclusive transformation at local level.
- 8) **"Do no harm to cohesion": all EU policies must support the strengthening of economic, social and territorial cohesion.** The European institutions should ensure that, from design to rollout, all programmes and policies are consistent and address potential differentiated territorial impacts, while reducing any administrative burden.

We invite the general public, trade unions, businesses, and non-governmental and civil society organisations to join us in our efforts to secure a just Europe that leaves no one behind.

Sign the Call

