Region Västra Götaland  
2019-12-06  

Message on the Cohesion Policy in Europe

Dear Ms. Commissioner Ferreira,

On behalf of the Region Västra Götaland, allow me to cordially congratulate you on your election as Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms. It will be a pleasure to support you in putting cohesion policy - and regions - at the top of the EU agenda as you outlined at the European Parliament on the 2 October 2019.

As President of the Region Västra Götaland, I would like to state my sincere belief in the EU cohesion policy as a valuable instrument for regional development and meeting the future challenges of the EU - and Region Västra Götaland.

Tackling climate change is a top priority for our region, where biodiversity and sustainable consumption must be addressed. Structures and methods that greatly reduces the CO2-emissions must be developed. Continuous investments in innovation, smart specialisation and skills are needed to attract, develop and keep competences to compete globally. Further investments in education and integration will be necessary to promote people’s possibilities to prosper and foster inclusive growth across the whole region.

To achieve this, cohesion policy, together with the regions own programs and initiatives, is an important instrument to develop efficient and appropriate solutions to these challenges, and to foster cooperation and generating new knowledge.

There are some important principles Region Västra Götaland believe the Commission need to focus on:

Cohesion policy needs sufficient resources to ensure EU sustainable development

Region Västra Götaland has come a long way in working towards social, economic and environmentally sustainable development. The challenges are however clear and extensive work is needed to transform into a fully sustainable region, in line with the European Green Deal. Cohesion policy plays a crucial role in securing the transition. Region Västra Götaland will support your efforts to ensure it has sufficient resources to deliver on the ambitious goals of the new European Commission and the development needs of regions, leaving no one behind. The potential reduction of the cohesion budget is therefore worrisome. The Just Transition Fund should be complementary to the European Structural and Investment Funds.

Regional ownership must continue to be guiding principle of cohesion policy

Region Västra Götaland calls on European Commission to ensure regions continue to be the driver for the implementation and strategic development of cohesion policy, including the European Semester. To secure structural reforms at a regional level, regional authorities must also be involved in setting the investments needs and priorities that will guide the cohesion policy funding. Regional involvement is key to make EU development efforts successful.
Europe needs a new strategy until 2030 that is based on the global sustainable development goals
Region Västra Götaland supports efforts of the European Commission to develop a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the SDGs. Common goals at the EU level allows local and regional actors to steer investments towards the same objectives. Such common goals would facilitate for synergies as well as strengthen and complement investments at regional, national and European level. This leads to optimal use of investments and contributes to a higher impact of cohesion policy.

European territorial cooperation must be safeguarded
Many of the challenges facing Västra Götaland are not geographically limited. In fact, they are central areas for close collaboration in the EU and especially with our neighbouring regions, that has a similar structure of the market as well as innovation and investment needs. European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) allows for joint development initiatives, helping the region to prosper through transnational cooperation. Disruption regarding programme scope and geography for post-2020 ETC programmes should be avoided.

To conclude, let me underline the need for a swift adoption of the long-term budget of the EU and the legislative framework for the European Structural and Investments funds. Delays in programming will affect not only the continuity of the funds and financing of projects in Västra Götaland, but also the delivery and efficiency of cohesion policy.

Best regards,

Johnny Magnusson
President of the Regional Executive Board
Region Västra Götaland