

Commissioner Crețu on “The next generation of EU Funds programmes”

*Press statement by Commissioner **Crețu**, in charge of Regional Policy, at the European Week of Regions and Cities; in Brussels.*

Good morning!

I am always glad to see so many journalists in the press room,
a reminder of the importance of cohesion policy
and of what it has achieved in your countries.

But today we talk not about past achievements.

We talk about the next generation of programmes.

In May the European Commission proposed,
an ambitious reform of cohesion policy.

It is a proposal that I am very proud of!

First of all, because we propose
a policy for all regions – with no region left behind.
And every region has needs; different, specific needs!

Then, we want

a more modern policy,

Tightly focussed on the twin priorities
of modernising the economy
and moving to a low carbon economy.

And furthermore, a simpler and more flexible policy:
we must cut red tape and speed up implementation.

Speeding up implementation is on my mind today.

Because the job does not end with proposals.

For investments to start as soon as 2021
programme design must start now.

Today starts the European Week of Cities and Regions!

A good time, and a good opportunity, I would say,
to reflect and discuss the future cohesion policy.

But before anything,

I would like to thank the president
of the Committee of the Regions,

Karl-Heinz Lambertz,

for his wholehearted support for cohesion policy.

So, today, I will start this debate

sharing my four important directions/suggestions
in line with our proposals and with EU priorities;
to help Member States and regions start
on the work of designing programmes.

“A smarter Europe”.

These investments are a priority,

If our regions are to remain competitive.

National authorities and regions must start reflections now.

On smart specialisation strategies,

i.e. innovation strategies based on local strengths

On finance and clustering for SMEs,

On how to help digitisation for citizens, business and government,

On training in the skills of tomorrow.

The new priority “A greener, low carbon Europe”.

Regions should start reflecting now on how to achieve:

Better energy efficiency and a greater use of renewables,

The transition to a circular economy.

Smarter energy systems.

Europe has the potential to lead the world in these technologies.

A new priority "A Europe closer to citizens".

I encourage our regions to reflect,

On community-led local development.

Local strategies, targeting local issues.

Fully involving local authorities and local people.

This must be deeply rooted in our programmes.

Whether the area is urban or rural, island or mountain.

In particular, national authorities and regions must reflect,

On local strategies for the integration of migrants.

Reception, education, employment,

Housing and local regeneration.

Building administrative capacity.

We have provided a series of tools:

PEER2PEER

the public procurement action plan,

the state aid action plan,

and, in the next period, the reform support instrument.

National authorities and regions must start reflections now,

on how best to use those tools.

Today, I shared my vision with the 4 main directions,

because we must do our utmost

at all levels of the decision making process

to avoid delays in preparing the next programmes.

We have ambitious, but also solid proposals for future cohesion policy.

Our proposals are currently with Council and European Parliament.

I urge them not to wait:

we must have a deal before the European elections.

But proposals are not enough.

Regions must already start to reflect,
on how they will turn these proposals into reality.

Thank you!