

Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

In times in which Europe needs to (im)prove more than ever its proximity to citizens, EU regional and cohesion policy has to be maintained. More than that, its achievements should point the way towards a stronger, citizen-driven Europe and be path-breaking also for all other policies:

Not only did cohesion policy - including ESIF, the European Structural and Investment Funds - lead to improved infrastructure and more jobs, strengthen enterprises, foster training and education or boost the European research landscape, to name just a few of its elements. Due in particular to its territorial approach it also resulted, in a number of cities and regions, in the creation of new places for dialogue on public policies and a direct involvement of citizens as a basis for long-term partnerships between different players within a territory, but also between territories. Cohesion Policy is a vehicle for European solidarity and local ownership of the European project.

The ESF in particular is nowadays considered, by cities and regions, an important tool to promote social inclusion and fight against poverty. It contributed to fighting discrimination and inequalities at local and European level. Its impact *on* and interrelation *with* social policies in the different Member States should not be under-estimated.

In a moment of rising populism and euro-scepticism we, local and regional authorities and social economy organisations, members of REVES, strongly advice against weakening or completely abandoning EU regional and cohesion policy (as proposed, for example, in scenario 4 of the White Paper on the Future of Europe).

We insist on the importance of being coherent with articles 174-178 TFEU and to maintain cohesion policy as a main cornerstone of the future European project, as it is in particular this policy allowing for a reduction of disparities among territories and citizens. At the same time we call on the European Commission and Member States to improve existing instruments and encourage policy-makers at national, regional and local level to make full use of all opportunities.

In this context, we urge the European Commission and Member States...

- ... to maintain the territorial approach in cohesion policy, as a recentralisation of ESIF and other instruments at national level would mean moving away from citizens and depriving local/regional authorities of important tools to promote (socially) sustainable local development;
- ... , in this context, to uphold opportunities to support smaller local projects able to tackle specific challenges in different local/regional contexts and reach out to citizens;
- ... to continue with the promotion and development of partnership-based instruments such as CLLD/LEADER and global grants, where appropriate;

- to earmark adequate financial support for related capacity-building of public and social private players;
- ... to revive community initiatives focusing on the social economy and partnerships following the example of the EQUAL programme in order to strengthen networks between public and (social) private players, involve citizens directly, make them feel the owner of developed strategies and initiatives, and generate social innovation;

and therefore

- ... keep a shared management approach, with a stronger role of the local and regional level;
- ... promote a further decentralised management of funds also at sub-regional level to make them more accessible for initiatives of local communities and partnerships;
- ... improve multi-level governance in the framework of cohesion policy, providing local and regional authorities as well as social and solidarity economy and civil society with better opportunities to take part in the elaboration, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of operational programmes;
- ... strengthen the partnership principle and work on possibilities to increase the application of the Code of Conduct (for example by making partnership an ex-ante conditionality);

furthermore

- ...to maintain or further increase the existing budget earmarked for Cohesion Policy;
- ... to make this budget available in order to reduce disparities all over Europe – also and especially with regard to specific fields such as social inclusion of specific target groups, offsetting differences regarding living standards between cities and rural areas, development of a diversity of forms of entrepreneurship, etc.;
- ... not to *replace* a part of financing through market-based financial instruments such as EFSI which is not governed following the same principles as ESIF;
- ... to promote a combination of ESIF and EFSI only if the following conditions are met: a) initiatives are selected on the basis of democratic and transparent procedures with a central role of public authorities and in cooperation with civil society and social partners; b) democratic governance and partnership-based programming, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the financed initiatives is guaranteed; c) access to a variety of actors and sizes of projects is ensured;
- ...to make EFSI accessible for smaller initiatives, the social and solidarity economy and related projects set up in partnership with public authorities, in case ESIF and EFSI will be used in a complementary way;
- ... to focus as much on cities as on any other type of territories (with the development of rural areas as well as concrete measures against depopulation being another important factor for Europe's sustainable future and fight against populism);
- ... to evaluate the effects of EU policies on the local and regional level with a view to more strongly link cohesion policy to other EU policy strands and procedures, including the European semester -

which also implies governance reforms of the latter towards a better involvement of the local and regional level;

- ... to maintain ex-ante conditionalities such as “anti-discrimination”, “gender equality” and “disability” and review ex-ante conditionalities so as to make them even more coherent with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights;
- ...to re-enforce transnational elements (e.g. in ESF-related programmes) so as to stimulate a pooling of competences and knowledge, but also solidarity between territories.



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For Tuscany Region



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A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Enrico Rossi".

Enrico Rossi

President



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

Region Östergötland 170426



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andreas Capilla", is positioned above the printed name.

Andreas Capilla

Regional Development Director

Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

For the City of Athens / Athens Development and Destination Management Agency



Alexis Galinos

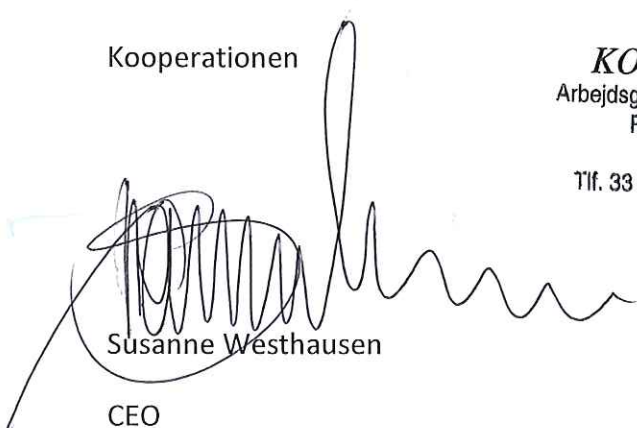
Chief Executive Officer of Athens Development and Destination Management Agency



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Susanne Westhausen

CEO



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

Department of Employment, Social Affairs and Family. Government of Catalonia

El director general d'Economia Social,
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Josep Vidal i Fàbrega

Josep Vidal Fàbrega

General Manager of social economy, third sector, cooperatives and self-employment



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Giuseppe Guerini

President



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For Coompanion Västra Götaland

COOMPANION

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "S. Bartilsson", is positioned below the Coompanion logo. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sven Bartilsson

Managing Director



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

For Kokkotyö Foundation sr



Margita Lukkarinen

CEO



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

For Region Örebro County



Region Örebro län

Bengt Storbacka

Chairman, Board for Culture, Education and the Non-profit sector



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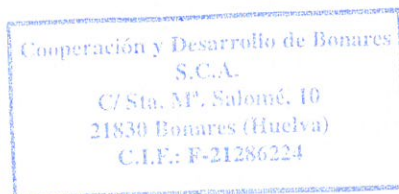
SAW-B, solidarité des alternatives wallonnes et bruxelloises

A handwritten signature in blue ink, belonging to Marie-caroline collard, is positioned above her name. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Marie-caroline collard, directrice

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COOPERACIÓN Y DESARROLLO DE BONARES, S. COOP. AND.



Fdo. Juan Antonio García García.

Presidente.



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For Comune di Brescia



Felice Scalvini

Assessore alle politiche per la Famiglia, la persona, la Sanità e alle Politiche giovanili

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COMUNE DI BRESCIA

Comune di Brescia - PG

Protocollo N.0122366/2017 del 19/07/2017



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President



**Comunità
Montana
di
Valle
Camonica**



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

For Comunità Montana di Valle Camonica



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President

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ENTE
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DELL'ADAMELLO



Declaration « The future of EU cohesion policy »

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