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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the General Affairs/Cohesion Council of 28 March 2025: A Strong Cohesion Policy for Growth, Convergence and Competitiveness - Information from Romania, supported by Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain

A Strong Cohesion Policy for Growth, Convergence and Competitiveness –

**Non-paper supported by BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES,
HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, PT, RO, SI, SK**

In consideration of the future cohesion policy in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the Romanian delegation, on behalf of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, would like to inform the Council on the non-paper regarding the need for *A Strong Cohesion Policy for Growth, Convergence and Competitiveness*.

The document advocates for a strong cohesion policy as a key driver for convergence, resilience and competitiveness, through a viable and robust budget, safeguarded in the next MFF, the regional GDP per capita as the main criterion for regional categorization, as well as through the preservation of shared management and the other core principles of the cohesion policy.

A Strong Cohesion Policy for Growth, Convergence and Competitiveness

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The strengthening of the economic, social and territorial cohesion is a prerequisite for a harmoniously developed, united, competitive and resilient European Union. The European Council, in its Strategic Agenda adopted on 27 June 2024, highlighted the need for the Union and the Member States to combine their strengths and resources to face the coming years with unity and resolve. In light of the new and complex challenges, including the war of aggression against Ukraine, affecting the socio-economic development of the Union, this resolution to keep all of EU Member States and regions on board should be actively pursued also in the design and ambition of the future MFF 2028+, abiding by the “do no harm to cohesion” principle.

While recognizing the need for a modern and adequate EU budget, we reaffirm the need to ensure that the future budget can further deliver for all regions and all types of territories, with greater support intensity for the less developed regions, aiming at reducing disparities between the levels of development in line with the Art. 174 of the TFEU. Furthering the convergence process is vital for expanding the functionality of the Single Market in order to make it successful and beneficial to all territories allowing citizens to have equal opportunities to live their life in every region of Europe.

A strong cohesion policy is a key driver for convergence, resilience and competitiveness, which are fundamentally interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Breaking this balance would entail systemic negative consequences for the Union leaving regions behind and less able than today to deliver the growth needed for facing new emerging challenges and for achieving the EU strategic priorities and the social prosperity, causing further discontent and widening of disparities. Only a robust and predictable future budget for cohesion policy at the heart of the new MFF can sustainably ensure that EU has the means to deliver on its commitments in line with the Art.174 TFEU.

The strength of cohesion policy as a long-term investment policy resides in its core principles, namely shared management, multi-level governance, partnership and the place - based approach. Therefore, these cornerstone principles should be preserved in the design and in the allocation methodology for the future cohesion policy through categories of regions.

In light of the above, we call upon the Commission to:

-  ***Propose a viable and robust budget, safeguarded for cohesion policy in the next MFF, at least equal to the current level in real terms, in order to further reduce regional disparities, enhance resilience, competitiveness and enable the achievement of EU strategic priorities, while reflecting the growing needs and challenges of all regions and all territories, aiming to prevent a sharp and drastic drop in the cohesion allocation of a region or Member State.***
-  ***Maintain regional GDP per capita as the main criterion for regional categorization.***
-  ***Preserve the implementation of the cohesion policy under the shared management mode in order to ensure that all regions can pursue investments needed for both convergence and competitiveness based on the development opportunities and needs of specific territories.***