



◆ **The President**

Brussels, 16 July 2010

To the attention of the
President of the European Commission
Mr. José Manuel BARROSO
Berlaymont, rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 BRUXELLES
BELGIUM

Dear President,

We have recently received several indications related to the European Commission's current preparations for the future financial framework 2014-2020 and the possibility to separate the European Social Fund from the other instruments of the cohesion policy, in particular the European Regional Development Fund.

In this context, I would like to express some of my concerns as current rapporteur of the Committee of the Regions on the cohesion policy instruments to be used for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and former rapporteur on the future of the cohesion policy 2014-2020.

Taking into consideration the importance of the future financial perspectives, we believe that the voice of regions and cities on the future of financing means for cohesion policy has to be heard. Indeed, promoting jobs and growth is not the exclusive task of central governments and we have to ensure that the European, national, regional and local levels are involved in a permanent dialogue.

Moreover, because regions and cities are among the biggest beneficiaries of structural funds, we believe that the ESF has proven its worth in the success of cohesion policy. Cohesion not only represents the expression of the European value of solidarity but also a successful investment in a competitive social market economy, with a strong impact on the wellbeing of all European citizens.

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Therefore we think that decoupling ESF from cohesion policy would be heading in the wrong direction. Through close connection with ERDF interventions the investment in training and re-training through the ESF can lead to new jobs and lasting employment.

Furthermore the unique delivery system of cohesion policy, multi-level governance and shared responsibility ensures that adequate solutions in addressing the key challenges for economic, social and environmental development can be found on the ground.

Cohesion policy must continue to deliver its ambitious objective as a community policy with a horizontal character, since it has proved its added value and contributed effectively to the promotion of economic and social growth and to the reduction of disparities between regions.

This is also an essential element for achieving ownership of local and regional actors and will thus contribute to meeting the Europe 2020 objectives.

For these reasons, we underline that it is important to maintain the European Social Fund as an integral part of cohesion policy and as an important instrument to reduce disparity in a global and place based development policy.

I hope we get the chance to further discuss this important topic.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Michael Schneider

President of the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions