



Draft Declaration of the #CohesionAlliance for a cohesive, sustainable and resilient Europe

*The #CohesionAlliance renews its political engagement in the post-COVID-19 Europe to affirm cohesion as a fundamental value of the European Union and a key objective for all its policies and investment. The COVID-19 crisis has shown that solidarity, responsibility and cohesion are needed now more than ever to ensure that **no one and no region is left behind**.*

Our ambition is to ensure that strong financial EU support is offered to Member States, regions, cities and villages. They are on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis and the EU 2021-2027 budget and the post-pandemic recovery plan must help them protect citizens, support local economies, make local communities resilient to crises and create a sustainable future. As the emergency risks deepening disparities between and within Member States, the absence of coordinated and timely EU action will increase the gaps between more and less developed communities.

In view of the adoption of the EU's Recovery Strategy and of the Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020, we reiterate the key principles of the #CohesionAlliance and call upon all leaders at European, national, regional and local level, from businesses and civil society, to support this Declaration.

As the #CohesionAlliance, we declare that:

1. the EU's **Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF)** is an essential tool to promote cohesion, convergence and competitiveness for all citizens in the European Union, wherever they live;
2. a **strong and effective cohesion policy for all regions, cities and villages** is vital to help them to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and to pursue major policies and challenges such as the European Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals, the European Pillar of Social Rights as well as the digital transformation;
3. All EU policies need to support the Cohesion objective in order to **strengthen the resilience of our regions, cities and villages**, to rebuild the economy, to foster sustainability and to strengthen the territorial and social fabric of our Union;
4. Cohesion policy must continue to be a **long-term investment policy based on sufficient resources of at least one-third of the next MFF and should be reinforced by the future EU Recovery Plan**;
5. the principles of **partnership, multilevel governance and the place-based approach** are decisive to deliver the objectives not only of cohesion policy but also of the EU's Recovery Plan; local and regional authorities are best placed to assess the investment needs at territorial level and need to be fully associated to decisions on [re]programming investment and on new operational programmes;
6. the recent **measures to increase flexibility and to further simplify cohesion policy** have extended the responsiveness of the policy and should be maintained where they have a proven and long-term benefit in the recovery effort without leading to more centralisation;
7. it is crucial that the recovery instruments that will address the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis reinforce Cohesion Policy and **are complementary and well-coordinated with the structural funds and other EU funding programmes**, without leading to any reduction of the cohesion support initially foreseen for all Member States and regions;
8. a stronger **European territorial cooperation** must help people, communities and businesses, cooperate across borders and overcome the detrimental effects of the crisis and speed up the economic recovery;
9. a **timely start of 2021-2027 cohesion policy programmes** and an **extended system of phasing out for 2014-2020 programmes** are needed to respond to the current crisis and to prepare the **long-term development strategies**; in case of delays, transitional arrangements with additional means must be foreseen to avoid a funding gap between the two programming periods;
10. EU and Member State leaders are urged to **assume their responsibilities towards citizens and agree upon the next Multiannual Financial Framework** and the **Recovery Strategy** to secure the timely start of cohesion policy programmes as of **1 January 2021**.

The CohesionAlliance partner organisation have put forward this draft proposal for a new declaration of the CohesionAlliance. To ensure a timely and inclusive process they would like to invite all interested organisations, institutions, individuals and signatories to send in their comments via e-mail to: cohesionalliance@cor.europa.eu by May 30th.

