

# **For better use of Cohesion policies in CEE countries; national experiences**

Dr Piotr Żuber

# Main features of the reformed cohesion policy

- Europeisation (Europa 2020 Strategy)
- Increased efficiency and effectiveness (concentration, more coordination at strategic and operational level, result orientation)
- Building the trust and strategic partnership
- Integrated territorial approach

# What saved the cohesion policy?

- response to criticism - report by Barca and subsequent discussion;
- different attitudes among members states – old paradigm versus new challenges;
- new European objectives (Europe 2020) and new system of the governance emerging in the EU after the crisis;
- the crisis, which underlined deficiencies of the policy but in the same time revealed that without the EU financing, the drop in investment rate in some countries and regions would be even higher and more disastrous.

# Main features of the reformed cohesion policy.

## *Europeisation of the reformed cohesion policy*

- Reformed cohesion policy is regarded as a major investment policy of the UE – primary tool for the realisation of the Europe 2020 strategy.
- And is closely linked with the new system of economic governance in the EU

## Consequences:

- Top down approach stronger than ever
- Sectoral organisation of objectives (thematic coordination) what influences the structure of operational programs, their implementation and monitoring systems
- Thematic earmarking of funds what focuses political interest and triggers a lot of lobbying

# Main features of the reformed cohesion policy.

## ***Increased effectiveness and efficiency***

- Orientation on results (indicators, evaluations), ex-ante conditionalities, performance framework, enhanced coordination between policies and funds = expected increase in efficiency of institutions

## **Consequences**

- More obligations = more administrative efforts and a need in increase of professional and academic knowledge among administration
- Thematic (silo type) organisation of the obligations makes territorial planning more difficult (from indicators to ex-ante conditionalities)

# Main features of the reformed cohesion policy.

## *Renewal of strategic partnership and broadening of the scope of development partners*

- An attempt to rebuild the trust and enhance strategic partnership foremost **between the Commission and Member States:**
- More development partners (urban and authorities from different types of territories),

## Consequences

- Apart of Members States no longer clear target group for the policy;
- Decreased role of regional authorities;
- Less regional operational programs!

# Main features of the reformed cohesion policy.

## *Application of the integrated territorial development concept*

- Need to reconcile the original integrated territorial development (place-based) concept with the new challenges and governance system in the EU.

## Consequences

- References to integrate territorial development are everywhere in ESIF regulations but....
- The definition of the territorial integrated development is ridiculous
- Place based approach has not become a major force organising the system of programming and implementation - **it can be use in addition to prevailing thematic approach.**

# General remarks on the reformed cohesion policy

- Reformed cohesion policy cannot be longer considered neither as a cohesion policy nor regional one
- Threat of loosing its rationale – a source of funding for other European policies
- Reforms are visible in the structure of the policy but they don't play well with each other:
  - „Europeisation” versus territorial integrated approach
  - Result orientation versus thematic concentration
  - Increased role of cities and other partners versus strnghtening of the position of Commission and Member states, etc.



# Some observations from programming process

- New system of programming requires a lot of administrative and intellectual efforts on both sides –  
**costly and works only when you believe it is worth to invest in.**
- From the first look the system looks logical but ....  
**the substance** (defining strategic goals in an integrated and balance – European and territorial - manner)  
**- is over-shadowed by the procedural aspects**

# Some observations from programming process

- Strengthened importance of the national strategy and quality of national administration (and political level) - It seems that it is possible to avoid a lot of traps only when you really know how and what you want to do:
  - the Commission tries hard but =it is not working yet ideally!
  - Need for building the system of coordination between all development policies and partners
- Territorial approach used only in addition to prevailing sectoral approach (because of the programming system requirements!) but it is possible to make benefit from some ESIF provisions!
- CEECs countries are in disadvantaged position (but the pressure is OK) but not only them (quality of administration and quality of strategies)

# Observations from programming process

## Observations on Integrated Territorial Investment

- Hesitation of some member states to use the ITI mechanism due to its relative novelty and a lot of programming and management questions but...
- Good examples from countries in which ITI is used as a solution to problems defined in national strategies (urban sprawl, delivery of essential public services, need for complex restructuring, socio-economic revitalisation of deprived areas):
  - activation of local authorities, enhanced cooperation, joint effort, efficiency, etc.
- Need for external (EC, MS, region) involvement and interest

# Observations from programming process

- The evaluation system seems to be improved but.. the challenge is to use evaluation findings in strategic discussions on the EU 2020 Strategy and the role of ESIF funds (the role of Annual implementation reports, progress reports for 2017 and 2019 and summary report on evaluation findings 2022) and management of OPs.
- Evaluation findings versus performance framework

# Reformed cohesion policy challenges on the side of MS.

- Because there is a complex and sophisticated programming system of strategies, programs and plan there is a need to:
- Efficient and strong coordination and new type of strategic implementation system at national, regional and local level (in hands of public administration but with partners of all funds with territorial impact:
  - territorial issues discussed at highest political level,
  - inclusion of all funds in one budget programming system,
  - institutional system of consultation and management involving many stakeholders and development partners,
- Difficulty with the use of even best strategies as a management tool at the highest political level;

# Reformed cohesion policy in Poland. Way forward

- ✓ A need to generate funds locally! Problem of 2020 – threat of dependency on EU funds.
- ✓ Good programming base –
  - ✓ no need to change objectives –
  - ✓ we are not talking about cohesion in traditional sense already but ..
  - ✓ not everybody understands this!
- ✓ More EU resources programmed and implemented directly at regional level should be complemented with the new system of multilevel governance;
- Preparing changes in competence acts regarding self-government (politically difficult).
- ✓ Further focus of efficiency and growth –from ideas to new instruments;
- ✓ Legislative works on alignment of spatial and socio-economic system of planning and implementation.

# Reformed cohesion policy in Poland. Way forward

- Setting up standards of providing access to public services (difficult);
- Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and coordination institutions (territorial observatories, cooperation with statistical offices at all level, improvement in the quality of data and evaluation),
- Enhancement of a dialogue with all development partners - introduction of **real** territorial contracts;
- Legislative works on alignment of spatial and socio-economic system of planning and implementation.

# What model of cohesion policy?

- Investment policy which is rooted deeply in territorial characteristics and contributes to realisation of European goals (not opposite!)
- Money for all – the difference makes the method of implementation and not GDP per capita!
- More attention to institutions and decision making sphere;
- European policies (different than cohesion policy) implemented through the European instruments of programming and delivery and coordinated with ESIF funds