



Bucharest Declaration: Investment and Cohesion in Europe's Regions and Local Authorities - Promoting Innovation and Cultural Heritage

26 November 2018

The European Alliance (EA) group at the Committee of the Regions, at its extraordinary meeting in Bucharest (Romania), held on 26 November 2018, confirmed its commitment to actively supporting investment and cohesion in Europe's regions and local authorities while promoting innovation and cultural heritage; it agreed on the following declaration.

The European Alliance group:

1. notes that economic, social and territorial cohesion is one of the EU's main objectives, ensuring balanced development and reducing disparities across its territory;
2. underlines the critical role of Cohesion Policy and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in enabling investment and cohesion in urban and rural areas, including island and mountain regions;
3. is supportive of a new European territorial cooperation programme enabling close cooperation between local and regional authorities in the Member States and neighborhood countries, especially in cross border areas;
4. calls on the European Parliament and Member States not to reduce Cohesion Policy's share in the EU budget post-2020 and stresses that investment should be defined in line with local needs and the partnership principle;
5. points out that rural development is an essential element of Cohesion Policy; therefore asks that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) remain part of the Common Provisions governing Cohesion Policy funds and that Pillar II of the Common Agriculture Policy be reinstated;
6. endorses the priority objective of a "smarter Europe" in the future European Structural and Investment Funds, aimed at promoting innovation and smart economic development in the EU's regions;
7. stresses that innovation is the key to enhancing economic and sustainable growth and creating jobs and calls on the EU to support all regions in developing their innovation strategies and their own competitive advantages while enabling greater synergies between ESIF and Horizon Europe programmes;

8. highlights the importance of cooperation among local and regional authorities on innovative projects and is convinced that Interregional Innovative Investments should enable transfer of knowledge between more and less developed regions;
 9. believes the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 (EYCH 2018) has been successful in raising awareness and promoting Europe's cultural richness and diversity; is of the opinion that EYCH 2018 should mark a starting point for further efforts and a greater role for cultural heritage across a range of different EU's policies and not be an end in itself;
 10. underlines that investing in culture and cultural heritage is essential to strengthening citizens' local, regional, national and European identities, as well as democratic values in Europe; considers that investment cooperation in cultural heritage is more than just the preservation of buildings, as it has a huge, yet still untapped potential to have a positive impact on local economies and social cohesion and promote cultural traditions through community involvement and dialogue, both within and outside the EU;
 11. highlights that the cultural heritage sector employs around 300 000 people with 7.8 million jobs indirectly linked to it; hence stresses the need for a new EU framework for promoting research and new technologies in this sector;
 12. emphasises the huge potential of digitalisation and ICT for the accessibility, promotion and preservation of cultural heritage and their beneficial effects on cultural and sustainable tourism and related creative industries;
 13. believes that innovation and digital solutions in cultural and natural heritage are paramount to the development of smart villages and the revitalisation of cities, town centres and rural and remote areas;
 14. urges national, regional and local authorities to enhance cooperation and coordination among public and private entities, research institutions and other relevant actors in order to stimulate entrepreneurship and investment while exploiting synergies between different sources of funding;
 15. calls on Member States to introduce financial and tax measures ensuring fair distribution of funding and resources among administrative territorial units;
 16. urges the local public administration authorities to cooperate with each other for the organization and exercise of any activities in order to carry out the duties assigned to them by law;
 17. instructs its President to forward this declaration to the CoR President, European Commission, European Parliament and the Council, along with national and regional governments.
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