



Europaforum III Northern Sweden

Positionpaper on the European Union`s future cohesion policy



Position paper

Europaforum Northern Sweden III

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EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN is a partnership consisting of political representatives at local and regional level in the four northernmost counties of Sweden - Jämtland, Västernorrland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten. This document should be seen as the prologue to a process in which northern Sweden will progressively define its position on the future European cohesion policy.

EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN

- welcomes the opportunity to participate in the debate on the future European cohesion policy
- holds that the cohesion policy must be a general policy that adds a regional perspective to the planning and implementation of all Community policy. This shall be carried out on the basis of gender equality and is a basic requirement for consolidated legitimacy among EU citizens.

EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN stresses the importance of cohesion policy lending support to the development of the regions of Europe that contribute added value to the Community. Consideration must be shown to cultural and historical aspects, as well as to the economic aspects. One example is the Saami population, which represents an important part of European cultural heritage. Besides its clean countryside and secure social environment, northern Sweden wishes to contribute added value to European through a full IT infrastructure and cutting-edge skills in both traditional and innovative fields, e.g. the wood and pulp industry, mining, space research, mineral exploration, bio-fuels and tele-medicine.

EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN points out

- that production growth and productivity growth in the Community are largely dependent on a high level of competence, stable physical infrastructure and a favourable innovative climate in the regions
- that northern Sweden must be part of the European infrastructure network
- that sustainable development in peripheral areas of Europe pre-supposes labour market areas with competitive towns and communities in interaction with a living rural sector

EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN highlights in particular the importance of the following:

- that the future cohesion policy within the EU must provide possibilities for equal development in all regions of Europe. Depopulation, sparse population, and adverse climate are criteria which must form part of the basis for the cohesion policy
- that permanent geographic and natural constraints present obstacles to peripheral areas of Europe in developing and changing their business structure
- that the EU cohesion policy is co-ordinated with other political areas, e.g. agricultural policy, competition policy and labour market policy
- of sustainable development, where limits are set on environmentally hazardous emissions, and where valuable natural environments are protected

EUROPAFORUM NORTHERN SWEDEN sees as its main points:

- **SOLIDARITY:** The expansion of the EU is of crucial importance in ensuring peace and development of the whole territory of Europe. Expansion also creates a strengthened Internal Market with increased production and increased trade within Europe. It is further important that the EU continues contributing to the development in countries and regions that border on the Union.
- **SUBSIDIARITY:** The EU cohesion policy must be co-ordinated with the national policy and must be steered by the principle of proximity. There must be a clear 'grass-roots perspective' and a dialogue with the community at large when policy is formulated. The regions must be principal players at EU level and national level, to ensure that the cohesion policy takes into consideration regional differences.
- **DEPOPULATION, SPARSE POPULATION AND ADVERSE CLIMATE:** It is necessary to consider the characteristics of regions with permanent geographical and natural constraints, e.g. island regions, mountain regions, sparsely-populated regions and remote regions. Sparse population and adverse climate are already basic criteria in the formulation of cohesion policy. To this in the future must be added depopulation and other demographic disadvantages. In peripheral parts of the Union, large distances to the market and to service and local community functions mean economic constraints and weakened competitiveness.
- **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT:** Cohesion policy within the EU must be co-ordinated with investments in infrastructure, research, education and competence development. In northern Sweden we are dependent on a small number of business and industrial sectors. To develop existing and new sectors, increased innovative capability is needed, through a stronger partnership between research, business and the public sector.
- **SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Half of all economic activity in the EU is concentrated in one-seventh of the geographic area of the EU. For long-term sustainable development, the resources of the whole Union must be utilised better. Towns are significant to the development of rural areas and vice versa. Sustainable development must take place in interaction between urban and rural areas.

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