



Commission communication (May 2007):

Growing Regions, Growing Europe: **Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion**

**Public consultation on the future of EU Cohesion Policy**

**Opinion of Energie-Cités  
31 January 2008**

Energie-Cités ([www.energie-cites.eu](http://www.energie-cites.eu)) read carefully the European Commission communication “**Growing Region, growing Europe: Fourth report on economic and social cohesion**” dated May 2007. Our contribution to the public consultation on the future of the EU cohesion policy is based on the question number **1.3 To what extent is climate change a challenge for cohesion policy?**

**1. Climate change and energy - a European challenge**

Today, it is acknowledged that climate change and energy issues are a major source of concern for the future. The EU is committed to transform into a highly energy efficient and low greenhouse-gas-emitting economy. Reaching the ambitious targets adopted by the European Council on 8-9 March 2007 on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and raising the share of renewable energy sources represent a great challenge in Europe. Achieving these 3x20 goals by 2020 will require cooperation of all relevant actors, especially local authorities. We are entering a new energy paradigm that will considerably affect territorial development. The first European cities engaged themselves to the achievement of these goals and more cities will follow (see [Covenant of Mayors](#)).

**2. Climate change and energy - a challenge for cohesion policy**

**Energie-Cités** and the cities we represent believe that new challenges identified within the reform of the cohesion policy 2007-13 – Climate change and Increased energy prices – will be one of the most important challenges in the new programming period.

We agree with the statement that “*Developing or expanding renewable energies and investing in energy efficiency provide major opportunities for most regions, with a high local job potential... Also, increases in energy prices could encourage growth strategies, especially in the lagging regions, based on less energy-intensive methods of production.*”

The EU cohesion policy is the closest to the Member States, regions and local authorities. It has an important role to support them in achieving these common objectives. No action that would be contradictory to achievement of the above mentioned objectives should be co-financed from the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.

Therefore the new cohesion policy should learn from the bad and build on the good experiences of the former programming period.

**Investments in sustainable energy solutions**

Should the EU aim to achieve its goals in the field of climate change, the budgets allocated to sustainable energy solutions, should be significantly increased in the future.

[Energie-Cités](#) and [Friends of the Earth](#) compared the plans of the New Member States to use the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund in 2007-2013 for sustainable energy projects. The results were alarming. The New Member States allocated very low budgets to sustainable energy projects and many important actions will not be financed at all. However, some of them revised their operational programmes and situation was improved.

**Transport**

Final energy consumption has continued to increase in the EU-27, transport sector representing the largest part (about 1/3) of overall energy consumption. Nevertheless, a large proportion of total cohesion policy spending on transport was invested in motorways or other roads over the period 2000–2006 (47%).

Energie-Cités supports the conclusion that the EU cohesion policy should continue redirecting its investments and invest much more funds into rail transport, public urban transport and other sustainable modes of transport (pedestrians and bike routes).

Source: Chapter 2 – Impact of the cohesion policy

### **Energy efficiency and renewable energy sources**

Energie-Cités welcomes the importance given to the renewable energies. These are described as “a *potentially major factor in combating climate change and EU dependency on oil and gas*”. However, we think that the same (if not higher) importance should be given to reduction of energy consumption and improvement of energy efficiency. For example, any new building built with the help of the Structural Funds should meet a more ambitious building standard (low energy or passive) or existing building stock should be refurbished before renewable energy technologies are integrated. Report mentions a need for demand management concerning water and waste. There is also a great need for **energy** demand management.

### **Exchange of experiences and transfer of good practice**

Energie-Cités welcomes that all the programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg, Urbact) objective support issues linked to energy and climate change. The exchange of experiences and transfer of good local practices in this field between the European cities bring the first positive results and new initiatives (e.g. [Covenant of Mayors](#)).

## **3. Orientation towards Lisbon/Gothenburg Agenda**

We believe that actions leading to improvement of environment and quality of life have a positive effect on mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The objectives outlined in the Gothenburg Agenda should acquire the same importance as those of the Lisbon agenda again.

## **4. Mid-term revision and re-orientation of the cohesion policy**

In the future, it could be considered to develop a special set of eligibility criteria taking into account the impact of the co-financed actions on the climate change mitigation. These criteria would be integrated into each operational programme (priority, measure) and it would be obligatory for beneficiaries to meet them.

We hope that DG REGIO will through its actions (and possibly Mid-term revision and re-orientation of the cohesion policy) encourage and support the EU Member States and especially local authorities to prepare themselves for a new energy paradigm and gain competitive advantage in the future.

Contact details:  
Energie-Cités  
2, chemin de Palente  
F-25000 BESANCON  
[info@energie-cites.eu](mailto:info@energie-cites.eu)  
[www.energie-cites.eu](http://www.energie-cites.eu)



With over **150 members in 24 countries** and representing more than **500 towns and cities**, **Energie-Cités** is the association of European local authorities for the promotion of local sustainable energy policies.