

Danuta Hübner
Chair of the Committee of Regional Development
European Parliament

THE NEW EU COHESION POLICY POST-2013

Fifth Cohesion Forum
"Investing in Europe's future:
The contribution of cohesion policy to Europe 2020"

Brussels, 1 February 2011

We do not start the debate on the future regional policy today. We have launched this debate with the previous Cohesion Report during the previous Cohesion Forum in September 2007. So why we are here today? I would mention five reasons.

First, we are here because Europe needs growth as never before. We need growth to pay our debts and reduce deficits, to face with a success global competition and to improve the quality of life in the future. This growth must be based on strategic choices. It must convert well known challenges into opportunities, jobs and competitiveness. It must ensure convergence within European territory. Entire European economic and social potential must work for the growth we need. All those features of the growth that Europe needs make regional policy a tailored made growth delivery vehicle.

Second, we are here because we know that we need that growth now, not tomorrow. There is therefore no time to invent, design and implement new growth delivering policy instruments and funds. We know how much time it takes for a policy machinery to be established, management and control systems to start working effectively, financial instruments to finance smoothly investment projects. So why not just fine tuning the machinery of regional policy.

Third, we are here not to consider if we need regional policy. We are here for one more reflection on how to further improve its capacity to generate growth, to refocus it, to reorient the investment and to reform the economy.

Fourth, we are here to mobilize other partners without whom the catalytic and leverage potential of regional policy will not be fully exploited. I think here about business partners, academic institutions and civil society. The post-crisis Europe need all hands on board.

And fifth, let me say that it is not a shame to speak about money when money matters. Growth as we all know needs investment to be sustainable, in particular in time of structural change. Investment needs funding. Practitioners know that a certain critical mass of funding is essential if results should come. Yes, regional policy, the policy mobilizing European growth potential across 271 regions needs a decent funding. Yes, we are facing the challenge of national budgets consolidation and cuts. But does the same logic should apply to the EU long term budget which will take us to 2020? National budgets are characterized by a tiny proportion of productive investment. EU budget is overwhelmingly an investment budget. The logic of national cuts must not apply to the EU budget. We should, however, spare no effort to make every euro bring highest possible return, increase its leverage and its catalytic function.