



Greening the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013

Coalition for Sustainable EU Funds – www.coalition-on-eufunds.org

Introduction

The NGO Coalition for Sustainable EU Funds is deeply concerned about the alarming neglect of sustainable development (Gothenburg agenda) in the draft Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013.¹ Cohesion Policy is the European Community's single most important instrument for promoting the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. Promoting Lisbon in the absence of Gothenburg, or making only weak commitments to the targets agreed in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy represents a major step backwards for EU policy. It contradicts the EU's otherwise strong political and legislative stance on sustainable development and environmental protection.

The draft Guidelines fall short on the horizontal and vertical integration of environment in the cohesion policy. The Guidelines should include *both*. We would like to see a new chapter on horizontal environmental integration at the beginning of the document (i.e. cross-cutting issues applying to all funding for all sectors). We also propose a redrafting of the 'environment' chapter addressing vertical environmental integration (i.e. investments directly related to the protection and improvement of environment). The current text omits elements key to ensuring that cohesion policy becomes sustainable, such as the management of natural resources.

1) Horizontal environmental integration

A new chapter should be added following the introduction to the Guidelines, properly addressing the following issues:

- putting **Gothenburg agenda** and Sustainable Development Strategy at an equal footing with the Lisbon agenda in the strategic guidelines
- ensuring that operational programmes contribute to the objectives of the EU's **Sixth Environmental Action Programme**
- ensuring that **Strategic Environmental Assessment** is properly and timely applied to all draft operational programmes and its results are fed into the operational programmes.
- recommending use of **selection criteria** which give a bonus to environmentally friendly and sustainable projects
- ensuring that **environmental authorities and NGOs** are involved in the programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the operational programmes
- ensure application of **the precautionary principle, the principle of preventive action, and the polluter pays principle** to all operational programmes and projects

¹ Non-paper of DGs Regional Policy and Employment – draft of 10 May 2005

2) Vertical environmental integration

We propose a redrafting of Priority One, chapter II:

Non-paper of DGs Regional Policy and Employment	Alternative proposal by NGO Coalition for Sustainable EU Funds
<p>II. Improve the environmental contribution to growth and jobs</p> <p>55. The attractiveness of Member States and regions for new investment and for drawing in skilled workers is increasingly linked to the quality of the environment. Future cohesion programmes should seek to strengthen potential synergies between environmental protection and growth. The provision of environmental services such as waste and wastewater treatment infrastructures, the decontamination of land to prepare it for new economic activities, and protection against certain environmental risks, all should have high priority in this context.</p> <p>56. Specific measures should be promoted when environmental issues hamper economic development and business location, especially in the new Member States where a lack of clean environment (soil contamination in particular), prevents the economic development of certain regions.</p> <p>57. Development strategies should be based in part on a prior evaluation of needs and specific issues faced by regions, using where possible appropriate indicators. Efforts should be made to promote the internalisation of external environmental costs, with support for the setting up and development of market-based instruments (see, for example, instruments proposed in the Environmental Technologies Action Plan).</p> <p>58. Accordingly, the recommended guidelines for action are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the significant needs for investment in infrastructures in the Convergence regions, particularly in the new Member States, to comply with environmental legislation, whether in the field of water, waste, and air. • ensuring that attractive conditions exist for business and their highly-qualified staff. This can be ensured by promoting land-use planning which reduces urban sprawl, and by rehabilitating the physical environment, including natural and cultural assets. 	<p>II. Improve the environmental contribution to growth and jobs</p> <p>55. Environmental investments contribute to the economy in three ways: they can ensure the long-term sustainability of economic growth, they decrease external environmental costs to the economy (e.g. health costs, clean-up costs or damage recovery) and they stimulate innovation and job creation. Future cohesion programmes should seek to strengthen potential synergies between environment and economy. The provision of environmental services such as waste and wastewater treatment infrastructures, management of natural resources, the decontamination of land, limitation of climate change and protection against certain environmental risks, all should have high priority in this context.</p> <p>56. In order to maximise economic benefits and minimise the costs, priority should be given to tackling environmental pollution at its source. In the waste management sector, this implies focusing on waste prevention, recycling and biodegradation of waste which are cheaper and provide more jobs in comparison with landfill and incineration, the least favourable end-of-pipe solutions.</p> <p>57. In order to ensure long-term sustainability of economic growth, it is necessary to ensure responsible management of natural resources, namely to prevent further biodiversity losses. Cohesion programmes will play an important role in co-financing implementation of Natura 2000 and the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>58. Specific measures should be promoted when environmental issues hamper economic development and, especially in the new Member States where a lack of clean environment (soil contamination in particular), prevents the economic development of certain regions.</p> <p>59. Accordingly, the recommended guidelines for action are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing the significant needs for investment for implementation of

Investments in this area should be clearly linked to the development of innovative and job-creating businesses on the sites concerned.

- promoting, in addition to the investments in sustainable energy and transport covered elsewhere, investments that contribute to the **EU Kyoto commitments**.
- undertaking **risk prevention** measures through an improved management of natural resources, more targeted research and better use of ICTs, and more innovative public management policies (see map in the annex).

59. Where Member States benefit from both the Cohesion Fund and the Structural Funds support, a distinction must be made in the programmes between the types of actions funded by each of the Funds. The Cohesion Fund should in general focus on infrastructure investments in water, waste and air pollution, while the Structural Funds should in general focus on the promotion of environmental management systems, on the diffusion of clean technologies in SMEs and the rehabilitation of contaminated sites.

environmental legislation in the Convergence regions, particularly in the new Member States, in the fields of water, waste, and air. Investments in the waste sector should clearly focus on waste prevention, recycling, and biodegradation of waste (e.g. composting and anaerobic digestion) as well as rehabilitation of contaminated sites.

- ensuring **responsible management of natural resources** by supporting the management of **Natura 2000** sites to prevent biodiversity decline and by promoting implementation of the **Water Framework Directive** to protect and restore water resources.
- ensuring that **attractive conditions exist for work and investment** by promoting land-use planning which reduces urban sprawl, and by rehabilitating the physical environment, including natural and cultural assets.
- promoting, in addition to the investments in sustainable energy and transport covered elsewhere, investments that contribute to the **EU Kyoto commitments**.
- undertaking **risk prevention** measures through an improved management of natural resources, more targeted research and better use of ICTs, and more innovative public management policies (see map in the annex).

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