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NOTE

From: Presidency

To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: The link between Cohesion Policy and the new strategic agenda for 2024-2029

– *Exchange of views*

At the meeting of the General Affairs Council dedicated to Cohesion Policy of next 18 June, on the basis of the Presidency paper set out in annex to this note, Ministers in charge of Cohesion Policy are invited to discuss the link between Cohesion Policy and the new strategic agenda for 2024 - 2029.

Background paper

for the General Affairs Council dedicated to Cohesion Policy

“The link between Cohesion Policy and the new strategic agenda for 2024-2029”

At the eve of defining the strategic priorities of the next European legislature, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union invites the Member States to discuss the link between the new 2024-2029 strategic agenda and the post-2027 Cohesion Policy.

Cohesion Policy makes it possible to **support public investments and mobilise private investments**. It also focuses on the **development of key productivity factors** – innovation, skills, infrastructure – and thus contributes to unlocking growth potential and strengthening the **competitiveness of European Regions**. Cohesion Policy also plays an important role in the development of human capital, both in terms of access to **employment and acquisition of skills** for the labour market of the future. It is also a vector of **social inclusion**, contributing to cohesion between European citizens and regions. Moreover, Cohesion Policy has focused in recent years on the challenges of **the green and digital transitions**, as well as the **industrial transformation of the Union**, thus contributing to strengthening the open strategic autonomy of the EU.

In this respect, the Letta report recalled the important role of Cohesion Policy for the EU’s future strategic objectives and its intrinsic link with the **single market**. Over the past 30 years, the single market and Cohesion Policy have been a major force for sustainable growth within the EU and for reducing disparities between Member States. The 9th Cohesion Report also highlights the fact that **many EU regions have experienced significant economic and social convergence** in past decades.

Cohesion Policy has also contributed to **strengthening the single market and making it more fair by ensuring that all regions participate and benefit from it. Cohesion Policy will continue to play a role in the future**, particularly in the light of potential EU enlargements, the geopolitical context, and the scale and complexity of the challenges to be solved.

In order to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth across Europe, one of the key challenges for the EU in the coming years is its ability to **implement its agenda and future strategic objectives while ensuring that all regions participate in the transitions for the benefit of their territories and populations.**

In order to guide the discussions at the ministerial meeting, the Belgian Presidency invites ministers to share their vision on the two questions below.

These questions will be dealt with in a single round table session. Interventions should not exceed **3 minutes**.

Cohesion policy, as the main EU investment policy, has played an important role in EU development, competitiveness and convergence.

- *How can we ensure that an adapted Cohesion Policy continues to play an important role in achieving the EU's strategic objectives?*
- *How can we ensure that all regions, taking into account their specificities and differences, participate in the European response to current and future challenges and in the implementation of the future priorities of the strategic agenda?*