



Position paper of the State Working Group of the EU Representatives of the Berlin districts on the future of the EU cohesion policy from 2021

At the present time, discussion and planning processes have started at all political levels (state, national and EU) to lay the groundwork for the cohesion policy from 2021.

*The State Working Group of the EU Representatives of the Berlin districts explicitly supports the efforts of the State of Berlin to **follow the EU cohesion policy** as of 2021.*

As an interface between citizens, clubs, associations, institutions and companies - as recipients of European funding policy - and the political decision-makers, the State Working Group considers it their job to draw attention to local challenges and needs within the context of European policy. The purpose of this paper is to bring integration and innovation to the opinion-forming, strategy-development and coordination processes, and thereby to contribute to improving the effectiveness and recognition of European development policy.

1. Cohesion policy is intended to bind together the states and regions of the European Union in order to **promote peace** – peace must be recognised once again as the most important achievement of European unification. The values and achievements of the European Union, such as security, solidarity, freedom, democracy, freedom of movement, unity in diversity and social protection must be protected and promoted to protect the cohesion of the EU and continued European integration. It is important to act decisively to counter nationalist (exclusionist) efforts, euro-scepticism and criticism with coherent and convincing arguments.
2. Defined by its Europe 2020 strategy, cohesion policy is currently more market-oriented. In future, there will be a significant strengthening of the social and environmental dimension of the cohesion policy, thereby making a constructive **contribution to global sustainable development goals** (SDGs) that have been signed by the EU member states. In this way, the EU intends to actively contribute to sustainable development of its regions and regain lost confidence of its citizens.
3. The EU's cohesion policy must be visible and “tangible” for its citizens. To this end, a **European public relations offensive** will promote the participation of citizens of the member states in political processes within the EU, stimulating greater popular identification with the EU. The option to participate in development processes (especially local ones) using EU funding instruments should not be hampered by unnecessary, sometimes contradictory administrative hurdles, formal requirements and a lack of transparency. It is essential to ensure **ease of access** to funding opportunities. When implementing the structural fund in the State of Berlin (and in Germany), an **open and transparent competitive process** must be enabled for all funding instruments. Furthermore, the district EU representatives should be informed of funding commitments to exclude duplicated funding and to ensure transparency of the use of the available resources.



4. The cohesion policy should make **cross-border EU funding** a fundamental principle of its funding strategy. In other words, it should not only promote individual funding instruments, such as INTERREG, that support territorial cooperation. Instead, all funding instruments should also be available for thematic cooperation and partnerships that tackle shared problems as well as providing development opportunities and solutions across the boundaries of districts, regions, federal states and European member states, thereby reflecting the fundamental principles of the European Union.

5. Berlin should not only be measured within a national context when determining its need for support from available EU financial sources or assessing the progress of the strategies and funding instruments of the operational programmes. **Berlin should be compared with cities or conurbations** with the same or similar conditions and challenges within a European context.