

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002948/26
to the Commission
Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza (ECR)
(15 July 2026)**

Subject: Gold-plating turns cohesion funding into a purely bureaucratic exercise

Gold-plating (adding further bureaucratic requirements at national or sub-national level that go beyond the obligations laid down in EU law) directly affects access to European funding.

In Romania, funding applicants are faced with repeated requests for documents, redundant checks, conflicting interpretations, frequent changes to procedures and disproportionate administrative obligations. This system does not automatically guarantee better protection of the Union budget but instead drives up the cost of preparing and implementing European projects, drags out the evaluation and reimbursement process, increases the risk of error and discourages local authorities, SMEs and those with limited administrative resources to apply for European funding. In practice, access to funding is becoming increasingly dependent on the ability to manage red tape rather than on the quality and impact of a given project.

1. Will the Commission look into the extent and causes of gold-plating in the implementation of cohesion funding, including in Romania?
2. Will it distinguish between unjustified national requirements and audit tasks arising from the complexity or overlap of sector-specific Union rules?
3. What concrete measures will it take to eliminate redundant checks, apply the ‘once-only’ principle, make systems interoperable and genuinely simplify access to funds, without weakening the protection of the Union’s financial interests?

Submitted: 15.7.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(4 September 2026)**

The Commission is committed to reducing administrative burden linked to the implementation of Cohesion funds. Reviews of Member States’ ‘gold plating’ practices are systematically performed, notably through audit work.

For the 2021-2027 programming period, the Commission has already identified 20 cases of such practices related to funds managed by the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy, mainly linked to the selection of operations, management verifications and audit work.

In some cases, national practices introduced systematic overapplication of control measures and resource-intensive procedures regardless of project risk or complexity.

Gold-plating practices are discussed with Member States representatives during monitoring committee and annual performance review meetings, as well as in the Transnational Network on Simplification and the Expert Group on the Common Provisions Regulation Funds.

In its compliance audit work, the Commission identifies any rules, processes and procedures that constitute an excessive administrative burden and cost, or that can be simplified without undermining the overall assurance and effectiveness of the management and control system.

Should the Commission identify ‘gold-plating’ practices, it will recommend the Member State to take corrective actions, which are then followed up by auditors until fulfilled.

The 2024 ‘Action Plan to enhance detection capacity’ requests Member States’ authorities to draw recommendations to improve and simplify control systems and related rules.

The implementation is monitored by the Joint Audit Directorate for Cohesion via bilateral discussions with each audit authority throughout 2025 and 2026.
