

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-001882/24
to the Commission
Irmhild Boßdorf (ESN)
(30 September 2024)**

Subject: Cohesion Policy as a tool to influence regional elections in the EU

In the current programming period (2021-2027), around EUR 373 billion has been earmarked for EU Cohesion Policy.

When I asked at the REGI Committee meeting on 9 September 2024 what tangible results EU Cohesion Policy had brought, Commissioner Ferreira was vague in her response. The main point she made in her comments was that Cohesion Policy had a direct influence on elections in beneficiary regions — more specifically, it tended to bring down the anti-EU vote.

According to an April 2024 study by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy entitled ‘Paying off Populism: EU-Regionalpolitik verringert Unterstützung populistischer Parteien’ [‘EU regional policy reduces support for populist parties’], targeted EU regional policy measures and investments have the power to shave 2-3% off the right-wing populists’ share of the vote ⁽¹⁾.

1. Is EU Cohesion Policy being used to target projects in regions in which anti-EU or patriotic parties are polling better than average?
2. In the current programming period, are projects which seek to steer or push things in a specific pro-European political direction being financed by EU Cohesion Policy?

Submitted: 30.9.2024

**Answer given by Ms Ferreira on behalf of the European Commission
(15 November 2024)**

1. Cohesion Policy is vital to Europe's long-term success and unity. By promoting convergence and correcting national and regional disparities it also plays a role in maintaining stability, democracy, and shared prosperity across the EU. The allocation of Cohesion Policy funds is based on objective criteria and is established with the aim to promote economic, social, and territorial cohesion ⁽¹⁾. Projects are selected with a view to achieving programme objectives. Carrying out the selection process is the responsibility of the Member States at an appropriate level and the regulatory framework requires that selection is non-discriminatory and transparent. Therefore, selection procedures cannot take into account considerations relating to political party adherence.

2. Projects financed by the Cohesion Policy Funds aim at fostering the social, economic and territorial development of recipient Member States and regions. The Ninth Cohesion Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion ⁽²⁾ provides a wide range of evidence on the benefits of Cohesion Policy in regions across Europe, irrespective of how their citizens vote. In the 2014-2020 financing period, Cohesion Policy supported 4.4 million businesses, created 370 thousand jobs, and improved healthcare and energy services for millions of citizens. Also, Cohesion Policy has significant and positive effects for Europe as a whole and for each of its regions. Macroeconomic modelling suggests that the 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programmes, taken together, could increase EU Gross Domestic Product by 1% by the end of 2030 ⁽³⁾. The impact is, of course, much stronger in Cohesion countries, but it is positive in all Member States and regions, even after considering payments made to the EU budget.

¹ https://www.ifw-kiel.de/fileadmin/Dateiverwaltung/IfW-Publications/fis-import/f16df84e-a721-422e-a087-de3d56c8473e-KPB_172_dt_0804_V3.pdf

⁽¹⁾ Pursuant to the objectives laid down in Articles 174 and 175 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

⁽²⁾ Inforegio — Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (europa.eu): https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/cohesion-report_en

⁽³⁾ This impact is long-lasting: remaining at 0.6% by 2043.