



## EC open consultation for the next Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020

THE CITY OF OULU EXPRESSION OF OPINION REGARDING COHESION POLICY IN THE UPCOMING EU 2021+ PROGRAMMING PERIOD

### **The City of Oulu wishes to point out the following crucial aspects in relation to cohesion policy:**

1. The level of cohesion funding shall remain at a significant level in Northern and Eastern Finland based on the special status for an area with low population density as stated in the Accession Treaty of Finland. Continuing viability of Northern and Eastern Finland is a precondition for national competitiveness and, in particular, a question of security policy.
2. Cohesion funding provides a significant leverage effect for innovation and employment policies in Eastern and Northern Finland as well as in Oulu Region, when national innovation policy funding and State resources are mainly focused on Southern Finland.
3. The cross-border programmes implemented as a part of the cohesion funding shall be directed towards the implementation of focal points of the arctic policy, including sustainable growth and competitiveness, environmental protection, arctic skills and competences as well as infrastructure and accessibility.
4. Funding of urban policy (ITI) is an important instrument of urban development for developing strategic intercity cooperation and responding to common urban challenges. ITI financial framework as a part of cohesion funds is to remain reasonable. Oulu, as the largest city in Northern Finland, shall have a significant role in implementing the ITI instrument also in the upcoming programming period.



**Regional development of both competitiveness and employment shall lie in the centre of cohesion policy.**

The City of Oulu fully shares the opinion entered in the memorandum of 3.11.2017 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment:

*“Finland is targeting for a relatively higher cohesion policy funding. In addition to sufficient basic funding, the special status for Eastern and Northern Finland with low population density as stated in the Accession Treaty of Finland shall be safeguarded. Moreover, also other special characteristics including the Baltic Sea, arctic characteristics and the frontier zone with Russia shall be taken into account in funding.”*

Keeping sparsely populated areas further north inhabited and viable is also an important security policy aspect for Finland. Oulu, as the fifth largest city in Finland and the largest centre not only in Northern Finland but in the EU's northernmost region, shoulders significant responsibility for implementing competitiveness, growth, employment and wellbeing in the region. Promotion of economic competitiveness in the region requires contribution towards development. To be able to shoulder its responsibilities, Oulu shall require significant cohesion funding also in the future for implementing innovation and competitiveness policies.

In Oulu and in Eastern and Northern Finland, cohesion funding has played a significant role in research, development and innovation activities. In Oulu, cohesion funds have been successfully targeted, among other things, to reforming and strengthening innovation ecosystems. The leading-edge sectors in Oulu, including 5G, IOT, health technology and artificial intelligence, to name a few, bring significant added value to national and European competitiveness.

**Interreg Programmes as an instrument of implementing arctic policy**

Oulu states the opinion that the cross-border programmes implemented as a part of cohesion policy shall be directed towards the implementation of focal points of the arctic policy, including sustainable growth, competitiveness, infrastructure and accessibility. As stated in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment memorandum on 3.11.2017:

*“The cross-border cooperation implemented as a part of the cohesion policy shall bring added value from both the frontier zone development and security perspectives. Cross-border cooperation can significantly promote competitiveness and economic development, environmental cooperation and maintain stability in both internal and external frontier regions.”*

**ITI Funding to solve common urban challenges**

Urban policy funding (ITI) is an important instrument of urban development for developing strategic intercity cooperation and responding to common urban challenges. In Finland, ITI 6Aika Funds for the joint development of the six largest cities enhances economic spin-offs in the regions and allows cities and regions to take on the role of an active development and innovation platform. Oulu's role and responsibility is significant in executing joint urban strategy to ensure national effectiveness also in the upcoming programming period.

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