



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY
Better implementation, Major Projects and Programme Implementation III
The Director

Brussels,
REGIO.DDG.F.3/MG/aj/(2020) 2108532

Subject: Communicating EU Cohesion Policy support to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Minister, dear Marshals,

Over the last couple of weeks, the EU has introduced a robust package of legislative and operational changes to mitigate the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: from the suspension of fiscal rules, by loosening state aid rules, to the delay of clearance for advance payments and also the introduction of numerous flexibility mechanisms for the European Structural and Investment Funds. Further measures in other sectors are under consideration.

The European Commission services dealing with ESI Funds (DG REGIO, DG EMPL) mobilised all means at its disposal to support Poland in tackling the pandemics. First of all, we work hand in hand with Polish national and regional authorities to redirect the ESIF financial assistance in order to flexibly respond to the rapidly emerging needs in the most exposed sectors, such as healthcare, SMEs and labour markets, and thereby help the most affected regions in Poland and their citizens.

Secondly, we provide flexible solutions as regards management of financial resources available in the current programmes. This includes a proposal to relinquish this year the obligation to request refunding of recoveries of unspent pre-financing for the ESIF for 2019 and to use this money for investments under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative. In case of Poland, this amounts to around EUR 1 billion (indicative amount pending the final outcome of the examination and acceptance of accounts). The Commission will also accelerate the payment of the 2020 annual pre-financing to Poland in two instalments amounting to EUR 2,169,025,306.77 over the upcoming days and weeks.

At the same time we would like to stress the importance of diligent communication about the involvement of the ESI Funds in Poland in tackling the pandemics. Let us not forget that in the face of adversity, the Cohesion Policy plays an important role in building the European identity and it is the most tangible expression of European solidarity on the ground.

Whereas with some of the managing authorities and intermediate/involved bodies we developed specific standards for press releases, social media content and visuals, many other involved bodies do not acknowledge the substantial EU assistance in counteracting the pandemics or apply double standards while informing the public. We noted that some managing authorities and intermediate bodies do not inform the public about the substantial EU assistance in a way that complies with EU publication requirements and proper means of communication. The same applies to messages on social media.

Given the very collaborative spirit between the EC and the Polish authorities, I encourage you to address these recent shortcomings in communications. Informing the general public about EU budget support is a crucial part of programme management in order to ensure transparency but also in order to provide proper information to the citizens.

In practical terms: the European Union budget (not only abbreviations POIR, POWER, RPO, POPC) shall be highlighted in the headline, sub-headline or text of a press release. For the social media we propose the use of a standard hashtag #funduszeUE #FunduszeEuropejskie and also the portrayal of the EU flag on all visuals.

Adequate communication shall apply not only to single projects but also to entire schemes. From ERDF, the support for SMEs in crisis is planned from regional OPs and from the national OP Smart Growth. For the latter, the planned budget is not less than EUR 250 million. From ESF, a broad central scheme of wage subsidies is agreed on to be financed from OP KED and regional OPs. We were informed that the Polish government prepared an initiative to tackle the consequences of the coronavirus crisis called ‘Anticrisis shield’. While this is a government-led initiative, we understand that the several schemes mentioned above will be an important part of this package providing necessary financing (such as the planned scheme for SMEs from OP Smart Growth or wage subsidies from OP KED). We would like to ask you to ensure that proper emphasis is given about the EU funding for these elements of the package.

Poland continues to be the biggest beneficiary of the Cohesion Policy and has proved its capacity and ability to use the funds effectively and efficiently. I trust that all authorities involved in the implementation of the Cohesion Policy funds in Poland, i.e. all managing authorities including the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and 16 Marshal offices, and all intermediate/involved bodies (among others: Centre for Projects Digital Poland, Ministry of Digitalisation, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Development, Ministry of Culture, Regional Labour Offices, NCBR, PARP, BGK etc. as well as officials representing those institutions) will follow the Commission’s recommendations to ensure a high level of awareness of the role of EU Cohesion Policy funds in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

In times of coronavirus we must work even closer than before in the spirit of European solidarity.

Yours faithfully,

(e-signed)

Erich Unterwurzacher

To:

Ms Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak, Minister of Funds and Regional Policy

Mr Cezary Przybylski, Marshal of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Dolnośląskie Voivodeship 2014-2020

Mr Piotr Całbecki, Marshal of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship 2014-2020

Mr Jarosław Stawiarski, Marshal of the Lubelskie Voivodshop - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Lubelskie Voivodeship 2014-2020

Ms Elżbieta Polak, Marshal of the Lubuskie Voivodeship - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Lubuskie Voivodeship 2014-2020

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Mr Witold Kozłowski, Marshal of the Małopolskie Voivodship - - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Małopolska Voivodeship 2014-2020

Mr Adam Struzik, Marshal of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship - Managing Authority of the Regional Operational Programme of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship 2014-2020

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