



General Affairs Council (Cohesion)

Brussels, 30 November 2023

Chair: María Jesús MONTERO CUADRADO, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and the Civil Service of Spain

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

The Council will be invited to approve conclusions on the future of cohesion policy.

Ministers will exchange views on the closure of the 2014-2020 programming period.

The Council will also hold a discussion on cohesion policy and European strategic autonomy.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting (+/- 14.45).

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[General Affairs Council \(Cohesion\). 23 November - meeting page](#)

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

The future of cohesion policy

The Council will be invited to approve conclusions on the future of cohesion policy.

The conclusions set out its position on key aspects of cohesion policy to be kept and developed in the future. They will serve as a basis for discussions in the coming years and for the Commission's work on the legislative framework for cohesion policy after 2027.

The Council has earlier provided guidance for the way forward on cohesion policy in its conclusions of 22 November 2022.

Ministers also discussed the direction of cohesion policy once the multiannual financial framework comes to an end in 2027 at their informal meeting on 29 September 2023 in Murcia, Spain.

[Draft Council conclusions on cohesion policy](#)

[Informal ministerial meeting on general affairs \(cohesion\), 29 September 2023, Murcia, Spain](#)

[Cohesion policy: Council approves conclusions taking stock of implementation and outlining the way forward \(press release, 22 November 2022\)](#)

2014-2020 programming period

Ministers will discuss the closure of the 2014-2020 programming period.

In its background note for the debate, the presidency notes that the closing process for the 2014-2020 period is nearing its end, with 31 December 2023 being the final date for eligibility of expenditure and 30 June 2024 the final date for certifying and declaring expenditure. As of 31 October 2023, the implementation rate for the EU-27 amounted to 84 % (including only the expenditure already declared by the member states, and not the expenditure actually incurred and reviewed by them).

The note also describes the different crises and measures that impacted the implementation of Cohesion policy funds in the 2014-2020 programming period, which were modified many times to adjust to changes in eligibility and implementation rules.

Against this background, ministers will be invited to outline their views on possible measures that would help increase the absorption of Cohesion policy funds in the 2014-2020 programmes in the final stage of their closure.

In its background note, the presidency suggests as example the extension of the period for submitting payment applications beyond 30 June 2024.

[Background note for the debate](#)

Cohesion policy and strategic autonomy

The Council will also discuss how cohesion policy could contribute to pursuing European strategic autonomy.

In the background note for the debate, the presidency outlines various challenges related to international openness, as well as geopolitical, technological and environmental changes, which highlight the need to bolster European strategic autonomy in areas such as energy, health supplies, digital technologies or food.

In particular, the note focuses on the need to support the development of large EU companies in strategic sectors and counteract their relocation in the context where their international competitors in countries such as the US and China are receiving aid from the states in which they are located.

Against this background, the presidency considers that Cohesion policy funds are an optimal instrument for supporting industrial development of large EU companies in strategic sectors, as they can help reduce the EU's dependency on third countries in such sectors, while fostering regional development in the EU.

Ministers will be invited to discuss concrete ways how cohesion policy could foster the EU's strategic autonomy and boost the international competitiveness of its large companies in strategic sectors, as drivers of job and wealth creation in the EU regions.

[Background note for the debate](#)
