



General Affairs Council (Cohesion) **Luxembourg, 18 June 2024**

Chair: Elio di RUPO, Minister-President of Wallonia, on behalf of the Belgian presidency

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

Ministers will discuss the link between cohesion policy and the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029.

The Council will be invited to approve conclusions on the Commission communication on the 9th Cohesion Report.

Under 'any other business', ministers will be briefed on the recent joint declaration by 11 ministers responsible for cohesion policy, and on the 'Karlov Vary Annual Policy Dialogue Statement' of June 2023.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting (+/- 12.15).

* * *

[General Affairs Council \(Cohesion\), 18 June - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

* * *

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

Cohesion policy and the next EU strategic agenda

The Council will discuss the link between cohesion policy and the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029. To steer the debate, the presidency has prepared a background note.

In its note, the presidency highlights that cohesion policy, as the main EU investment policy, has played an important role in the EU's development, competitiveness, and convergence to date. It has done so by focusing on key productivity factors contributing to competitiveness, social inclusion, the green and digital transitions and the industrial transformation, and by strengthening the single market and ensuring that all regions can participate and benefit from it.

In its note, the presidency also points out that a key challenge for the EU in the coming years is to implement its agenda and future strategic objectives while ensuring the participation of all regions for the benefit of their territories and populations.

Against this background, ministers are invited to discuss how to ensure that cohesion policy will continue to play an important role in achieving the EU's strategic objectives in the future, and how to ensure that all regions, considering their specificities and differences, can participate in the implementation of the priorities of the next EU strategic agenda.

[Background note for the debate](#)

[EU strategic agenda 2024–2029 \(background information\)](#)

Conclusions on the 9th Cohesion Report

The Council will be invited to approve conclusions on the Commission communication on the 9th Cohesion Report.

The report assesses the state-of-play of the EU's economic, social, and territorial cohesion based on a wide range of indicators. It shows that cohesion policy is fulfilling its mission to narrow economic, social, and territorial disparities across the EU, driving economic growth and employment, investing to implement the green and digital transitions on the ground, and supporting member states and regions in times of crisis. At the same time, some challenges remain, such as the need to address demographic changes and to reduce disparities between large metropolitan areas and other regions, in particular the least developed regions and regions caught in a 'development trap'.

The Commission's communication on the report also points to the need to reflect how the design of cohesion policy could be improved in the future. According to the communication, some aspects to consider include addressing emerging economic dynamics and new imbalances, tailoring support to regional needs, faster implementation, further simplification, stronger performance orientation and linkage with reforms, and built-in flexibilities to react to unforeseen events.

In its conclusions, set to be approved on 18 June, the Council takes note of the findings in the 9th Cohesion Report, recalls the structural and emerging challenges that risk widening disparities across the EU, and provides guidance on key aspects of cohesion policy in the post-2027 period. It asks the Commission to develop proposals aimed at adapting cohesion policy in line with its role as the long-term framework for regional development, building on its distinctive strengths – shared management, multi-level governance, place-based approach and partnership principle – while bearing in mind that regions have different starting points, needs and capacities, and should take different development paths to ongoing and future transformations.

[Draft conclusions on the communication on the 9th Cohesion Report](#)

[Ninth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion \(European Commission\)](#)

[Cohesion policy: Council sets out guiding principles for the future \(press release, 30 November 2023\)](#)

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

[Informal meeting of ministers responsible for cohesion policy, 5-6 February 2024, Mons, Belgium](#)

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

Any other business

- Joint declaration by 11 ministers responsible for cohesion policy

Czechia will inform ministers about the joint declaration adopted at an informal meeting of 11 ministers responsible for cohesion policy on 14 May 2024 in Prague, Czechia.

The meeting was organised by Czechia as the presiding country of the Visegrad Group. It gathered ministers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Czechia to discuss the future of cohesion policy.

As an outcome of the meeting, the 11 ministers signed a joint declaration, which highlights the role of cohesion in the EU development and addresses a number of issues related to cohesion policy post-2027, including its scope, financial aspects and implementation, as well as the possible impact of enlargement on the policy.

[Joint declaration of ministers responsible for cohesion policy, Prague, May 2024](#)

- ‘Karlovy Vary Annual Policy Dialogue Statement’ and the need for strengthening just transition in regions affected by decarbonisation

Czechia and Slovakia will also inform ministers about the statement adopted at the Annual Political Dialogue for Coal Regions in Transition on June 27–28 June 2023 in Karlovy Vary, Czechia.

The meeting gathered key actors in the field of just transition, including European commissioners, ministers and regional representatives to discuss the state of play of the just transition process and the practical problems that regions face in implementing the Just Transition Fund.

As an outcome of the meeting, 22 regional and municipal representatives from 11 EU member states – Czechia, Germany, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria, Ireland, Finland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain – signed the ‘Karlovy Vary Annual Policy Dialogue Statement’.

The statement calls for early dialogue between the coal regions and EU institutions regarding the architecture of EU funds after 2027 and for maintaining specific support for transition of coal regions in the 2028-2034 programming period.

[Karlovy Vary Statement “Coal Regions need further support beyond 2027 to leave no one behind!”, June 2023](#)