



**COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONS
CONSEIL DES COMMUNES ET REGIONS D'EUROPE**

Registered in the Register of Interest Representatives

Registration number :

81142561702-61

CEMR Position
on
the Role of the
European Social Fund
for Local Development
in the Future Cohesion Policy

Brussels, June 2011

1. CEMR considers the European Social Fund (ESF) to be **a relevant part of the EU Structural Funds** and that the new programming period will provide a great opportunity for increasing both the visibility and effectiveness of this Fund.
2. The experience of our members in their national context shows that, whenever **Local Development** approaches are used for implementing the ESF, the visibility of the Fund and its efficiency is clearly demonstrated vis-à-vis other delivery methods. In particular, it enables the ESF interventions to really respond to local and regional challenges (more quality of employment, better inclusion, better flexibility and mobility, etc).
3. We are convinced that the best results can be achieved by making the ESF a key instrument for the support of Local Development **partnership approaches**, in particular when it is applied in an integrated way to address specific local development issues. CEMR welcomes the Commission's recent work on those two issues and would be interested to provide further experience and evidence from our members.
4. CEMR strongly calls for the use of ESF **together with other EU funds** of the Structural Funds (ERDF, EAFRD and EFF) and other funding programmes such as the TEN-T, LIFE, CIP, R&D and others whenever their interventions aim at or are connected with an integrated local development approach.
5. These interventions should be organised within local partnerships and **pursue local integrated strategies** in specific geographic areas (coastal areas, rural areas and urban areas). However, there may be difficulties to adapt ESF investments to the territorial needs and to achieve synergies with the other funds to support a local development strategy.
6. We are convinced that local interventions allow **greater civil society involvement**, community empowerment and generation of innovative ideas and as such lead to **better results** that other levels are not able to obtain (e.g. in-depth knowledge of the context where the intervention is designed and implemented, better capacity to adapt to evolving needs, etc.).
7. In relation to the **criticisms raised about local development**, such as the lack of strategic vision, great differences in quality of management and implementing structures across local authorities, or the difficulty to demonstrate *quantitative* results (as opposed to *qualitative* results, where the value of local development can be easier demonstrated), we believe that the combination of the local development with the integrated approach and the introduction of a performance / outcome-based policy, the alleged shortcomings can be addressed.
8. In terms of **visibility**, the refocusing on Local Development has obvious advantages as it will be more clear to identify and define the specific ESF interventions at a local scale rather than as part of national programmes. For the same reason ESF-supported Europe2020 Local Development strategies can provide a more identifiable added value of the European Social Fund interventions.
9. With regards to how ESF Local Development should **relate to the rest of ESF interventions** we believe that there are a range of complementary possibilities, from a specific Local Development priority in the ESF operation programmes to a horizontal Local Development dimension. We believe that the Regulations should at the very least provide for this range of options to use ESF for local development .