



Follow-up of the programming work for the ESI funds in Sweden

Europaforum Norra Sverige

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the assignment

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) is a network for politicians at the local and regional levels from Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland and Västernorrland. EFNS is a meeting place and knowledge arena where EU policies are analysed and discussed as regards how they affect northern Sweden. EFNS monitors European issues to influence EU legislation, the EU's strategies and action programmes and the EU's budget. The objective of EFNS is to safeguard the interests of northern Sweden both in the European arena and in relations to the national level in matters with a clear European perspective.

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) are a very important resource contribution in the regional development efforts and strengthen northern Sweden's possibilities of contributing to a cohesive Europe. The ESI funds, which are coordinated under a joint superior structure fund regulation, comprise the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

Prior to and during the Swedish programming work, Europaforum Norra Sverige therefore became involved in structure, planning and content in future funds and programmes for the period 2014-2020 (see appendix EFNS' position statements). EFNS has also followed the work during earlier programme periods and there are many lessons learned and experiences gleaned.

1.2 About the assignment

On 21 February 2014, EFNS took the position that the programming work for EU2020 should be followed up (see appendix). The objective of the follow-up is, based on the Structural Fund Regulation 1303/2013, the Code of Conduct and the Partnership Agreement:

- a) to follow up and map the regional level (EFNS) influence and impact opportunities in the programming work 2014-2020
- b) to clarify the programme structure's conditions for effective and coordinated programming work (EFNS)
- c) to identify obstacles and propose how programme structure and multi-level governance can be strengthened at the regional, national and Commission level for the next programme period 2021--.

The goal is to contribute to a well-functioning structure for multi-level governance for the European cohesion policy in future policy processes (planning, programming, implementation and evaluation).

It has been of major importance to conduct the follow-up work as soon as possible to, at an early stage, capture and identify structures that worked in a simplifying direction for the programming work and to identify potential obstacles to functioning multi-level governance that are important to adjust for future programming work (2020-).

There were many actors from different levels of society (from local to European Commission level) that participated in the work of preparing the Swedish programmes for the European Structural and Investment Funds (the ESI funds). The follow-up was delimited to the regional level (EFNS positions), national level (Partnership Agreement, directives and guidelines for the programming process) and the European Commission level (Structural Fund Regulation, the Common Strategic Framework and the Code of Conduct). Accordingly, when the regional level is mentioned in the follow-up, the regional level is meant that constitutes Europaforum Norra Sverige, which includes politically governed regional associations and regional municipalities with growth responsibility as well as county councils and associations of local authorities. When the national level is mentioned, the Member State and its programme-/fund-responsible ministries are primarily meant. This means that the follow-up does not span over all areas, but that the ambition is to capture the major features and the wholes for the work on the preparation of the operational programmes. It shall also be added that the European Regional Development Fund programme (ERDF) has been given the most space in the follow-up in light of the programme's significance to regional investments, and that the programme has a clear regional connection.

The follow-up's target group is broad, but primarily targets concerned actors at the regional, national (ministries) and Commission level (DGs). The follow-up encourages continued dialogue on the experiences of the programming work with a focus on improving the system for the programming work.

The follow-up is divided into five sections of which the Commission's intentions and directives regarding the programming work are presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 aims to present an account of the main features in the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and the ESI funds' operational programmes. Chapter 4 presents a follow-up of the Commission's intentions and directives as to how the Swedish process handled them and EFNS' view of the work. The aim of this section is to follow up EFNS' possibilities of influence and impact based on the positions presented. In the concluding section, Chapter 5, the conclusions are summarised and recommendations for the upcoming programming work 2021- are submitted.

The evaluation was prepared by the Cohesion Policy Group within EFNS.

2. European Commission's intentions and directives for 2014-2020

2.1 Direction of a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (EU2020)

Europe 2020 is the EU growth strategy for a smart and sustainable economy for all. Through the EU 2020 strategy, the objective for the EU and its member states is to achieve high employment, good productivity and social cohesion. The core of EU 2020 is:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy
- Growth for all: stimulating an economy with high employment and economic, social and territorial cohesion,

To carry out and implement EU 2020, every level in the EU and the member states are involved. Responsibility is specified in the strategy. Based on the follow-up delimitation:

- *Commission*
Shall annually assess the situation on the basis of a set of indicators that show the overall progress toward the goal, i.e. a smart and green economy for all with high employment, productivity and social cohesion.
- *National, regional and local level*
All national, regional and local authorities should implement the partnership in close cooperation with the parliaments, labour market parties and representatives of civil society, and contribute to the formulation of the national reform programmes and their implementation. By establishing a permanent dialogue between various administration levels, the Union's prioritisations will come closer to the public and strengthen the personal responsibility that is required to be able to implement the Europe 2020 strategy.

2.2 The Common Strategic Framework (1303/2013)

With the aim of supporting the member states' possibilities of achieving the EU 2020 targets, there are five funds for financing important endeavours.

Prior to the programme period 2014-2020, the EU adopted (17 December 2013) a common regulation with common provisions for all structural and investment funds (the ESI funds); *European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)*, *European Social Fund (ESF)*, *the Cohesion Fund*, *European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)* and *the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)*. The regulation was supplemented with regulations with special provisions for the respective funds.

In Appendix 1 to the Common Provisions Regulation for the ESI funds, there is the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) in which strategic guiding principles to facilitate programme planning and the sector-wise and territorial coordination of the Union's efforts through the European Structural and Investment Funds have been further developed.

2.2.1 CSF: Partnership Agreement - an anchor bolt for the programmes

The Partnership Agreement is a strategic document with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of the implementation of the programmes for the ESI funds, to improve the goal fulfilment for Europe 2020 and increase the coordination and synergies between the various funds to thereby make it easier for the actors that are to implement projects and apply for EU funding.

In the regulation for the ESI funds, it is established that a partnership agreement shall be prepared between the member state and the Commission formulated in point 20 in the introduction to the Common Framework for the ESI funds: *“On the basis of the CSF, each Member State should prepare, in cooperation with its partners, and in dialogue with the Commission, a Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement should translate the elements set out in the CSF into the national context and set out firm commitments to the achievement of Union objectives through the programming of the ESI Funds.”*

The Partnership Agreement builds on a clear multi-level governance principle for the preparation and implementation of the programmes in the structural and investment funds. From being a matter between the states and the EU, the actors that in reality also carry out the intentions of the EU funds and programmes at a regional and local level including representatives from different sectors shall also participate in their formation.

Article 5.1 in the Common Framework for the ESI funds sets out the grounds for the regional partnership that is strived for. *“For the Partnership Agreement and each programme, each Member State shall in accordance with its institutional and legal framework organise a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities.”*

2.2.2 CSF: Fund coordination and an integrated implementation

In CSF, fund coordination is emphasized for better co-utilisation and step-up of the various funds. In the common provisions, it is summarised among other things with the assumption of the appendix of a common strategic framework: *“(16) In order to maximise the contribution of the ESI Funds and to establish strategic guiding principles to facilitate the programming process at the level of Member States and the regions, a Common Strategic Framework (‘CSF’) should be established. The CSF should facilitate the sectoral and territorial coordination of Union intervention under the ESI Funds /.../ taking into account the key territorial challenges of the various types of territories./.../(17) The CSF should set out /.../ the arrangements to promote an integrated use of the ESI Funds”.*

This is also something that is clarified in the Common Strategic Framework in section 3:1: *“Member States shall seek to make maximum use of the possibilities for ensuring coordinated and integrated delivery of the ESI funds./.../2. Member States and/.../ regions shall ensure that the interventions supported through the ESI Funds are complementary and are implemented in a coordinated manner with a view to creating synergies”*

2.2.3 CSF: thematic prioritisations

The funds shall be focused on 11 thematic targets with requirements on concentration, results and with well-motivated documentation. *“(21) Member States should concentrate support to ensure a significant contribution to the achievement of Union objectives in line with their specific national and regional development needs. Ex ante conditionalities, as well as a concise and exhaustive set of objective criteria for their assessment, should be defined /.../The Commission should assess the consistency and adequacy of the information provided by the Member State.”*

As well as with the definition in Article 2: *“3. ‘smart specialisation strategy’ means the national or regional innovation strategies which set priorities in order to build competitive advantage...”*

The CSF extensively formulates what shall be included in and lifted up for an analysis of various regional needs and conditions that shall provide an argument for the choice of national and regional prioritisations. The following point of departure is established: *“6.1 Member States shall take account of geographic or demographic features and take steps to address the specific territorial challenges of each region to unlock their specific development potential”*. In the introductory text of the CSF, it is also established: *“(6) The northern sparsely populated regions should benefit from specific measures and additional funding to offset the severe and natural or demographic handicaps /.../*

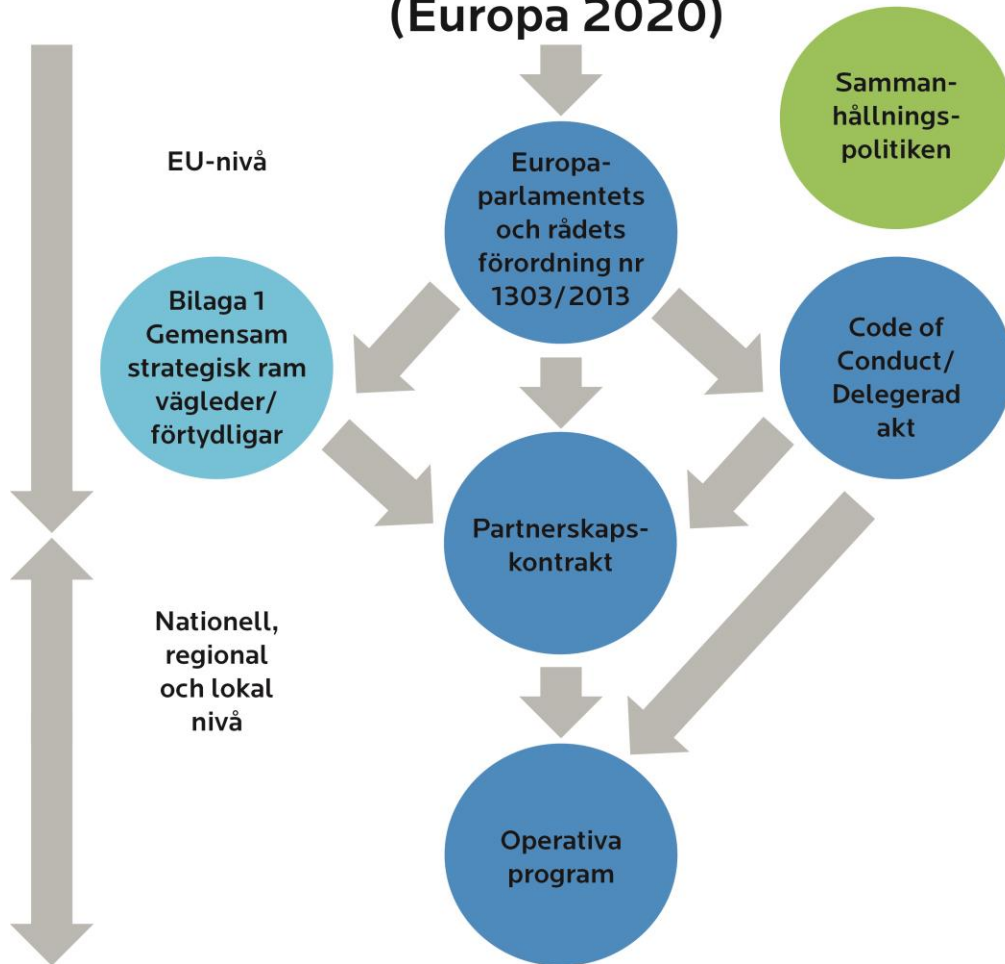
2.3 Code of Conduct (delegated act for multi-level governance and partnership)

In a delegated act, the Commission sets forth a European “Code of Conduct” with the aim of supporting and facilitating the authorities’ work by organising partnerships.

This emphasizes the importance of EU 2020 being carried out in a horizontal and vertical multi-level governance in order to best mobilise and coordinate the strength that exists within the European Union. The act gives directives for multi-level governance and partnerships:

- The right composition of actors in the work with the PA and the programmes: the Commission emphasizes the importance of a broad participation of the social actors (horizontal and vertical multi-level governance)
- The time aspect. The member states and responsible authorities shall consult participating actors on the process and the “time table” that applies for the preparation of both the Partnership Agreement and the programmes.
- Transparency and clarity regarding a dialogue about challenges and efforts to handle the problems, prioritisations of goals and areas of engagement and coordination of efforts based on a multi-level perspective.

Smart, hållbar och inkluderande tillväxt (Europa 2020)



3 The Swedish process

3.1 The Partnership Agreement and Swedish guidelines

In November 2012, the European Commission presented its points of departure for the negotiations with Sweden on an upcoming Partnership Agreement (PA) and in December of the same year, the Commission also presented a general template for the formulation of the Partnership Agreement, documentation for how the PA should be prepared containing headings, ex ante conditions, arguments for prioritisations and objectives. The aim was to create a dialogue between the national level and the European Commission.

In its position statement, *Opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden*, 21 February 2013, Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) considered that it was good that the European Commission began the dialogue with Sweden through the preparation of Sweden's challenges and the prioritisations that should be made to achieve the EU 2020 targets. In the position statement, EFNS expressed a desire for the PA to clarify the local and regional level's role in the development work and that northern Sweden's unique potential was important to safeguard.

The preparation of the Partnership Agreement was begun in Sweden at year-end 2012 with the intention of being turned over to the European Commission during autumn 2013.

The PA should be prepared through greater coordination between the concerned ministries, the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, the Ministry of Employment and the Ministry of Rural Affairs, and in accordance with the intentions that are expressed in the Common Strategy Framework (CSF), see Chapter 2.2. The introductory information emphasized that the PA should provide support and guidance to the actual programming and be drafted in collaboration with concerned actors for a good anchoring of prioritisations and content.

Initially, the dialogue on the PA was planned to be implemented with authorities and organisations at the senior official level and with regional growth managers through the regional director network in a smaller grouping. The dialogue with the regional political level was initially forgotten, but after demands from the political regional representatives, a grouping was formed (the so-called Eight-Man Group) with a political representative per regional programme area, for direct information from the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation in the form of joint meetings in the course of the negotiations. In addition to this, four dialogue meetings (large meetings with around 200 participants) with the aim of discussing overall prioritisations and anchoring the Partnership Agreement with concerned actors. The regional level participated in meetings and through written opinions during the PA in the dialogue process.

In May 2013, awaiting the preparation of the Partnership Agreement, all programmers received the **government's guidelines for programme preparation**. The guidelines describe the structural fund programmes as a part of the regional growth work and illustrate a *“need to develop cooperation and coordination between the EU level, macro-regional, national, regional and local level to best utilise and enable synergies and avoid double work”*.

The guidelines guide the continued programming work and thereby the programmes' formulation and thematic direction. The guidelines for the regional structural fund programmes describe strategic direction, the intention and the work on the Partnership Agreement, how the structural fund programmes are prepared, synergies and coordination with other programmes, thematic direction and the government's view of direction and what should be prioritised in the programmes. However, it is not presented in the guidelines how the thematic direction was established and on what grounds, other than with reference to the budget bill (2012/13:1, cost area 19).

In September 2013, the proposals on the regional and national structural fund programmes were turned over to the government, still awaiting the Partnership Agreement.

At the end of April 2014, the Partnership Agreement was sent to the European Commission to be approved in autumn 2014.

Summary

- *The work with the Partnership Agreement was delayed and contributed to delaying the programming process.*
- *In Sweden, the Partnership Agreement was formulated in parallel with the preparation of the ESI programmes. The coordinating and guiding function that the PA was intended to have was thereby weak.*
- *The Partnership Agreement became more of a general collective document for all programmes.*
- *The guidance for the programme proposal instead came from the government's guidelines on programme preparation.*

3.2 Programme structure and the operational programmes

European Commission

The European Commission does not establish the programme structures in the respective member state, but regulates that a legally assured, capable and functional implementation occurs, in accordance with the multi-level governance principle.

The member states and the administering authorities shall *“ensure the existence of arrangements for the effective coordination of the ESI Funds in order to increase the impact and effectiveness of the Funds including, where appropriate, through the use of multi-fund programmes for the Funds.”* (CSF 3.2 b)

“Each Member State shall designate, for each operational programme, a national, regional or local public authority or body or a private body as managing authority. The same managing authority may be designated for more than one operational programme.” (Article 123)

Europaforum Norra Sverige

In its position statement *Opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden*, (21 February 2013), Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) questions the implementation divided by fund with regional and national programmes that were applied during the programme period 2007-2013. EFNS emphasized and saw advantages of regional multi-fund programmes (such as in Goal 1 in the period 2000-2006), as they enable a higher degree of regional influence and ownership, but also more efficient resource utilisation through coordinated and supplemental funds. EFNS emphasized the importance of a direction towards regionalisation that the number of managing authorities and programmes should not be expanded and that Swedish programming, management and decision-making structure for the ESI funds should follow the NUTS II geography.

In Sweden, the Partnership Agreement states that it is an advantage to build further on approved existing systems for programme implementation, which forms the basis of decisions on the programme structure and the managing authorities' assignments. Sweden thereby chose to keep the implementation organisation that had been applied during the programme period 2007-2013.

At the beginning of 2013, the programming work is begun in Sweden based on the existing programme and management structure and in accordance with the “One fund - one programme” principle.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The **Regional structural fund programmes** for investments in growth and employment – European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), are formulated under the management of the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation. In Sweden, there are eight regional structural fund programmes that follow the NUTS II geography. In January 2013, the government offered to actors with regional growth responsibility to prepare the structural fund programmes.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (Tillväxtverket) is the management authority for all eight regional structural fund programmes. Tillväxtverket checks if applications for project funding fulfil the formal requirements and disburse funds. Eight regional structural fund partnerships are responsible for prioritisation between the applications approved by Tillväxtverket. The partnerships consist of elected representatives for municipalities and county councils, representatives for labour market organisations, authorities, interest organisations and associations.

Prior to the programme period 2014-2020, the regional programmes were supplemented with a national regional fund programmes. The programme's content was formulated at a national level by an authority group consisting of Tillväxtverket, the Swedish Government Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA) and the Swedish Energy Agency based on the government's guidelines for programme preparation. Tillväxtverket is the managing authority. The objective of the programme is to strengthen learning within and between the regional structural fund programmes, facilitating collaboration and creating incentive to connect together efforts conducted on the regional, national and European level.

European Social Fund (ESF)

The national programme for the **European Social Fund** (ESF) is formulated at a national level by the Ministry of Employment. In Sweden, there is a national programme that was supplemented in 2014 with eight regional action plans in the NUTS II geography.

The government requests regional growth managers in April 2013 to present important regional prioritisations for ESF and in May 2013 to present regional socio-economic analyses for input to the national ESF programme.

At the beginning of 2014, the regions gain access to a first draft of the national programme. In May of the same year, regional growth managers were offered to coordinate the preparation of regional action plans in close dialogue with the Swedish ESF council.

The Swedish ESF council is the managing authority. The ESF council checks if applications for project funding fulfil the formal requirements and disburse funds. Eight regional structural fund partnerships are responsible for prioritisation between the applications approved by the ESF council, same as for ERDF.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

The programme for the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund

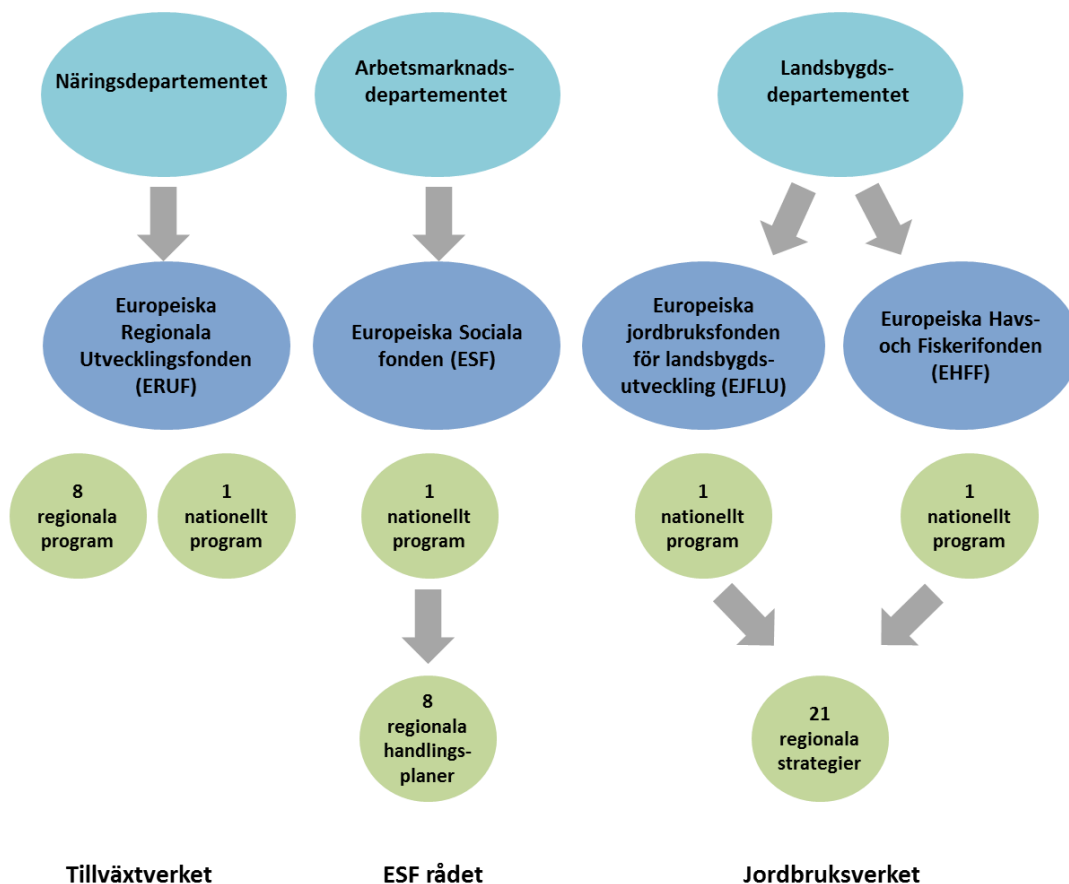
are formulated at the national level, by the Swedish Board of Agriculture under the management of the Ministry of Rural Affairs. In Sweden, there is a national **Rural Affairs Programme** and a national **Maritime and Fisheries Programme** that are applied on a regional level through joint regional implementation strategies, although in a different regional geography than NUTS II,

through a strategy by Sweden's 21 countries. In addition to these regional strategies, local strategies are formulated via Community Lead Local Development (CLLD) where an implementation with several funds is made possible.

In April 2013, the government commissions the 21 county administrative boards to prepare a SWOT analysis of their counties. The analysis shall present what regional needs should be met through the upcoming Rural Affairs Programme and the upcoming Fisheries Programme.

The Swedish Board of Agriculture is the managing authority for the Rural Affairs Programme and the Maritime and Fisheries Programme. The county administrative boards have the task of implementing the national rural affairs programme at the county level. The county administrative boards shall ensure that a partnership is created for the regional implementation of the rural affairs programme and fisheries programme. The partnership shall consist of representatives from business, NGOs and public organisations and from the actors that have the responsibility to coordinate the growth work and those with responsibility for the regional and social fund programmes.

The regional and local programme formulation is still under way in 2015.



Summary

- *Dialogue lacking on the formulation of the programme structure in Sweden*
- *The Swedish programme structure is fragmented with fund responsibility divided over different ministries, with several different administering authorities, different programme geographies (NUTS levels), where some programmes are formulated regionally while others are formulated nationally with associated regional plans.*
- *Programmes, action plans and implementation strategies are also planned out of time with each other at a regional level.*
- *Only the regional and structural fund programmes are formulated at a regional level, other programmes are national.*

4 The regional growth work meets the European Commission's directives through the Swedish process for the ESI funds

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) welcomes the European Commission's intentions to support the regions' possibilities in the new programme period to contribute to the EU 2020 targets, strengthen results, increase coordination between the funds and ensure multi-level governance in planning and implementation. It is therefore of particular interest to EFNS to follow up the Swedish programming work on the following points: (1) Thematic direction and concentration, (2) Fund coordination and (3) Territorial tools.

4.1 Thematic direction and concentration

European Commission

The European Commission directs the ESI funds at 11 thematic goals with associated investment priorities and with a requirement on thematic concentration. The objective is for the funds and programmes to clearly contribute to achieving the EU 2020 targets and that the efforts shall provide results and effect in the respective programme area.

1. Strengthen research, technical development and innovation
2. Increase the access to, use of and quality of information and communication technology
3. Increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises
4. Support the transition to a carbon dioxide-efficient economy in all sectors
5. Promote adaptation, risk prevention and risk management in connection with climate changes
6. Protect the environment and promote an effective resource utilisation
7. Promote sustainable transports and remove bottlenecks in important net infrastructure
8. Promote employment and labour mobility
9. Promote social inclusion and combat poverty
10. Invest in education, skills and lifelong learning
11. Improve the institutional capacity of authorities and concerned

In addition to this, the Commission has indicated which funds and programme geographies may chose the respective thematic goals and to some extent also established how much funding may or shall be set aside for this.

After negotiations between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, funding from the European regional fund can finance thematic goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 for the direction in the sparsely

populated areas. Affected regions may themselves choose how the funding shall be distributed between these thematic goals.

The programmes' thematic direction and concentration shall build on the principles of multi-level governance and in observation of geographic and demographic challenges and features, described in section 2.2.3.

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS)

In its position statement *Opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden*, Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) welcomed and through input in the final negotiations contributed to the clear emphasis on a limited number of prioritisations. EFNS at the same time emphasized the importance of programmes and efforts being formulated in a regional and local context: restricted prioritisations demand territorial adaptation to have an effect. EFNS particularly pointed out the need for continued efforts in information and communication technology and sustainable transports in the sparsely populated regions in Sweden. A position that was listened to in the decisions that were later made at an EU level.

In the Swedish programming work, the programmes' thematic direction and concentration built on the government's guidelines for programme preparation. The guidelines presented the government's view of the direction and prioritisations for the programmes. However, it is not presented in the guidelines how the thematic direction was established and on what grounds, other than with reference to the budget bill (2012/13:1, cost area 19). The sparsely populated areas' specific challenges and perspectives were not taken into account in these guidelines and the regions have not been able to influence directions and prioritisations in the course of the programming process.

An example of this exists in the regional structural fund programmes where there were desires in Central Norrland to enable efforts within thematic goal 10: Invest in education, skills and lifelong learning, but which were not approved in the government's final preparation of the proposed programme drafts. Although the region's potential in carbon-dioxide efficient fuels such as bioenergy is large, the programme areas in Upper and Central Norrland were not permitted to choose investment prioritisation Promote production and distribution of renewable energy within Thematic goal 4: support the transition to a carbon dioxide efficient economy.

Information and guidance on how the Swedish programmes shall be conducted and address the sparse population in the programming work are lacking throughout in the process. The Partnership Agreement addresses efforts to meet the NSPA area's specific challenges and perspectives only based on the support of sparsely populated areas via ERDF and not based on efforts in all programmes having to take this into account. In the final national programme proposals, it is thereby not illustrated how the chosen efforts meet the sparsely populated areas' (NSPA) challenges and potential. An example of this is the national Social Fund Programme, where in chapter 6 reference it made to "*Demographically conditional challenges and possibilities are handled in the scope of the eight regional fund programmes*".

The Swedish programme structure entails difficulties to ensure that the regional needs and challenges have been taken into account in the programmes' thematic direction and concentration. In part because the national programmes are unable to satisfy adequate territorial adaptation, in part because the regions have difficulty contributing to and influencing when the programme work is conducted in parallel by so many different actors and at so many different levels. Above all, the regional growth managers have difficulty following the Rural Affairs Programme's and Maritime and Fisheries Programme's thematic content as they are not offered to participate in the programming process.

The programmes instead contribute to reinforcing the national policy. *An example of this is the National Social Fund Programme with the objective of strengthening and developing the national labour market policy. The Social Fund Programme is focused on national initiatives with little reasoning on territorial differences and regional challenges. In the Partnership Agreement, it is also stated that "The Social Fund's resources are distributed to a greater extent than before on a national level with the aim of enabling more nationally directed efforts on the supply of competence and increased transitions to work, and thereby greater space for national prioritisations."*(page 126)

Even the national regional fund programme's directions support national policy, especially operational area 1, investment prioritisation 1a: *improve research and innovation infrastructure...* where the main direction is to support the development of the European Spallation Source (ESS).

Ex-ante evaluator's assessment is also that the programmes' measures and efforts meet the national needs and goals. Only for the regional structural fund programmes is it clarified that thematic objectives and operational areas are also assessed to achieve regional prioritisations and challenges.

The national policy is also in focus in the matter of Smart specialisation. The Swedish starting point is that the national innovation strategy meets the European Commission's ex ante conditions and that regional strategies for smart specialisation are not needed in the context.

During the programming work, **dialogue and negotiations on thematic direction** were conducted between the ministries and the European Commission. For the social fund programme, the Rural Affairs Programme and the Maritime and Fisheries Programme, the regional level was never involved in this dialogue. For the regional structural fund programmes, the regions were asked to answer questions and were required to clarify where the communicating parties (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation and the European Commission) did not always understand or were able to interpret each other. In connection with the programming process approaching a close, the regional programmers and the European Commission are meeting for dialogue on the programme's thematic contents. It is clear that the work could have been made considerably more efficient if the dialogue between the European Commission and the regional level had been stronger throughout the policy process.

This can be exemplified by the European Commission, despite the decisions for the regulations, in the negotiations on the Partnership Agreement and programmes for Sweden, maintained its original view particularly of the issue to not use the ESI funds for infrastructure and broadband. Even if it in some sense was taking a larger mandate than what the actual decisions provided space for, in reality it placed major demands on the Swedish side providing concrete input and arguments to reach success and thereby early in the process obtain support and concrete facts from the concerned regional actors.

In the programming process, the ministries and authorities have had an out-of-date view of how the regional level is organised and what organisations at different levels that they need to talk with in the programming process. The politically governed regional local authorities and regional associations, which in 17 of 21 counties have the regional growth responsibility, do not always therefore participate in important processes. *An example* of this is that the Swedish National Board of Agriculture solely talks with the county administrative boards (the regional government authorities), and the Ministry of Employment invites the chair of the Structural Fund Partnership when they want to talk with the regional level.

Summary

- *The programming process in Sweden does not ensure that thematic direction and concentration are based in regional needs and challenges.*
- *Features and challenges in the sparsely populated areas of northern Sweden (NSPA) are not taken into account in the guidelines and instructions that form the basis of the programming.*
- *The Swedish programme structure impedes regional influence on the programmes' thematic direction.*
- *The programmes meet national goals and challenges.*

4.2 Fund coordination

European Commission

Prior to the programme period 2014-2020, the European Commission emphasized the importance of greater fund coordination for better joint utilisation and a step-up of the various funds with a focus on the regional and local geography, see Chapter 2.2.2 .

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS)

In its position statement *Opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden* (21 February 2013), EFNS emphasized that the fund coordination is positive and should entail new possibilities and solutions for optimisation of the resources and a more cohesive development for northern Sweden. In the position, EFNS emphasized that fund coordination needs to characterise the programming work and the implementation. This was based on earlier experiences from the Goal 1 period 2006-2006, when all ESI funds were gathered in a regional multi-fund programme for EFNS' respective programme areas, and the evaluations that were done (2000-2006, 2007-2013).

In Sweden, conditions were created for greater fund coordination by coordinating affected ministries in the work on the Partnership Agreement. The Partnership Agreement describes the thematic direction for the respective programme based on a kind of fund distribution to avoid overlap (complementarity). However, there is a lack of reasoning on what possibilities exist to combine efforts from various programmes for greater added value (additionality).

In the government's guidelines for the preparation of the programmes, fund coordination is emphasized. *"It is important to ensure that synergies can be created between efforts financed by the European Regional Fund and the European Social Fund in the implementation of programmes and efforts... and that the possibility should be investigated at the preparation of the regional fund programmes. It is also important that coordination take place with the Rural Affairs Programme."* However, it is difficult to discern in the guidelines what consideration has been taken regarding fund coordination in the government's view of thematic focus and prioritisations for the programmes.

The Swedish programme structure, with the principle of one fund, one programme, with several different managing authorities, different programme geographies (NUTS levels), where some programmes are formulated regionally while others are formulated nationally with associated regional plans and where the programmes/action plans are out of time with each other at the regional level, makes it very difficult in the programming work to plan for good coordination of the funds based on the needs of the locations, the region and the territory.

Example: The regional structural fund programmes are drafted up to the regional level in 2013. The Social Fund Programme (ESF) and the Rural Affairs Programme (RAP) are prepared simultaneously at the national level for regional adaptation in the form of action plans and implementation strategies. For the fund coordination to take place in a regional context, the regional structural fund programmes need to be fund coordinated with the regional action plans for ESF and RAP. However,

this is prepared much later, during autumn 2014/spring 2015, after all programmes have been submitted to the European Commission. For RAP's regional implementation strategies, a programme geography is also applicable to the regional level that is different than for the regional structural fund programmes and the social fund programme's regional action plan.

Ex ante evaluation (Tillväxtanalys) for the regional structural fund programmes also points to the difficulties in fund coordination with reference to timetable and division of work that has varied between the regional fund and social fund. The evaluators are of the opinion that the programmers could have been able to support a future fund coordination using a common timetable and clearly coordinated processes.

A cohesive implementation of the programmes at the regional level is difficult in the fragmented programme structure. In Sweden, managing authorities are assigned to deepen their cooperation on issues common between the funds with the aim of enhancing the efficiency of the implementation and simplifying the project owners. This means promoting synergies and avoiding overlap between the Swedish programmes, in the practical implementation. The authorities constitute an important support in large parts of the project chain besides there being authority coordination for common simplifications, forms, harmonisation of timetables for information and informational meetings. However, it is still the case that the project applicants need to be aware of what authority they must speak to depending on the focus of the project. To make it easier for future project owners to be able to navigate in this programme structure and to avoid overlap, the experience is that focus is placed on clarifying the programmes and their direction, with the result that differences/boundaries between the programmes are emphasized rather than synergies and coordination between funds and programmes being illustrated.

For the respective programmes, there are different consultation structures/partnerships to create regional and local influence in implementation. It is in these structures that prioritisation of projects is done as a basis for the managing authority's formal decisions. The regional structural fund programme and the Regional Action Plan for ESF jointly share the structural fund partnership for implementation within their NUTS II area. The National Regional Fund Programme and the Rural Affairs Programme has a different consultation structure.

Summary

- *The fund coordination in the Swedish programmes ensures that no overlap occurs, but fails to create interaction between the funds for greater added value.*
- *Fund coordination in a regional context between the regional programmes and the regional action plans and the implementation strategies has not been possible in the Swedish programme structure.*
- *Efforts for improved fund coordination focus on counteracting obstacles in the fragmented programme structure.*

4.3 Territorial tools

European Commission:

For the programme period 2014-2020, the European Commission enables new tools for territorial development. CSF 3.3 states that “*Member States shall, where appropriate, combine the ESI Funds into integrated packages at local, regional or national level, which are tailor-made to address specific territorial challenges.... This can be done using ITIs, Integrated operations, Joint Action Plans and community-led local development.*”

The member state was encouraged to promote development of local and subregional approaches.

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS)

In its position statement *Opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden* (21 February 2013), EFNS requested that the Swedish process should utilise the Commission’s proposed tools for territorial development and test new and develop existing collaborative forms regarding Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community Lead Local Development (CLLD). EFNS expressed the importance of seeing the instruments as capacity building at the local and sub-regional level with the aim of developing an integrated development effort. The significance of possibilities for operations for sustainable urban development was also emphasized.

At the same time, EFNS confirmed that there were difficulties to more precisely talk about the tools since at the time there was still a lack of clear decisions if and how the tools could function in Sweden. EFNS emphasized the significance of a dialogue between the government and the local and

regional level regarding the new tools CLLD, ITI and Urban Development, forms and modes of operation.

In Sweden, there was initially great interest in the new territorial tools, as well as insight that potential difficulties needed to be investigated. The government's position on the possibility to develop local and subregional ways of working in programme implementation and how the issue was finally investigated is every unclear, however.

At the same time in the programming work, the government announced that ITI could not be provided in Sweden with the explanation that it did not agree with Swedish administration law or the equivalent.

Early on, the government also informed that Community Lead Local Development (CLLD) would be developed in the national programmes and build further on the experiences from LEADER (2007-2013). This essentially means that the set-up for CLLD came to be developed without dialogue with the regional level's representatives (regional growth managers). In the programme period 2014-2020, development is enabled of local strategies in all ESI funds (multi-fund strategies), under continued responsibility of the Ministry of Rural Affairs and the administrative authority of the Swedish Board of Agriculture. Development of the strategies is still under way (spring 2015).

Efforts for Sustainable Urban Development shall constitute at least 5% of the total budget for ERDF in the Swedish programmes. The government's attitude to and intentions with sustainable urban development have not been clear in the programming work. The process has built on deficient information and guidance, which has affected the regions' attitude as well as possibilities to choose ear-marked funding for sustainable urban development. It has been particularly difficult for the programmers to have insight into the European Commission's intentions on the cross-sector and integrated effort for sustainable urban development.

Summary

- *The Swedish attitude and approach to the territorial tools is very unclear in the programming work.*
- *The regional level does not participate in the dialogue on the territorial tools and conditions to apply them are impeded.*

5 Summary conclusions and recommendations

The aim of the follow-up is to, based on the European Commission's express intentions (Structural Fund Regulation, Common Strategic Framework and Code of Conduct), follow up and map the regional level's (EFNS) influence and impact possibilities in the programming work 2014-2020 to illustrate the programme structure's conditions for an effective and coordinated programming work (EFNS) and identify obstacles and propose how programme structures and multi-level governance can be reinforced at the regional, national and Commission level before the next program period 2021--.

Multi-level governance is pointed out by both the European Commission and national level as fundamental instruments for the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and the operational programmes. Multi-level governance is a form of governance that includes both formal and informal structures, relations and networks with the aim of strengthening capacity for society-wide issues that involve a breadth of actors and institutions. Multi-level governance is a way of working that pertains to cooperation vertically between different levels (locally, regionally, nationally and EU) and horizontally in each level. To provide an effect of the multi-level governance, the location-based knowledge and insight on the territorial feature is crucial. Other cornerstones are a functioning dialogue and joint action between and within the levels. This means that the number of actors involved is large and that the existing systems for managing the society-wide issues, often factual issue-oriented in so-called drain pipes, need to be supplemented and developed.

The follow-up's overall objective is to contribute to a better and well-functioning multi-level control and encourages dialogue. Conclusions and recommendations therefore rest on the OECD GAP analysis for assessing how the multi-level governance can be developed based on the identified obstacles between and within the levels (see appendix 3).

The follow-up assessed the multi-level governance in the programming work based on three main gaps: (1) Information gap, (2) Capacity gap and (3) Policy gap. The consequences of e.g. deficient information gap has an impact on (need for) capacity at different levels (EU, nationally, regionally and locally).

A) EFNS' possibility of influence and impact on the programming work 2014-2020

The follow-up confirms that the regional influence and impact in the programming work have been weak in the Swedish programming process. The reason is that observation of the principle of multi-level governance in accordance with CSF and the Code of Conduct has not been complied with. A consequence is that the region's (EFNS) features and regional needs have not satisfactorily been met in the operational programmes.

- The Commission emphasized (in CSF and the Code of Conduct) the importance of the time table being kept for the Partnership Agreement and the programming process and that it

would be consulted by the participating actors. Keeping the timetable has been inadequate and many of the issues and needs of concretely supplemental documentation were received by the regions' managers at a late phase, with considerable time pressure to deliver what was requested.

For the regional level, an important condition for the programming is that important documents and guidelines are available. For regional development managers with political governance, the political anchoring is a basic principle and timetable then needs to be clear and kept.

- The Commission emphasized the importance of transparency and clarity regarding a dialogue about challenges and efforts to handle the problems, prioritisations of goals and areas of engagement and coordination of efforts based on a functional multi-level perspective.
- The government's guidelines for the programming have been clear but transparency and participation in the guidelines formulation has been weak. Information has been missing and the timetable has been pressed. Imprecise orders of supplementations and documents from the national level to the regional programmers are difficult for the regional level to have capacity for. It would have been desirable with a clearer system for what is requested in documentation, the aim of them and the area of use. This way, the regional level receives greater capacity to meet the needs of the national and EU level.

b) Programme structure's conditions for effective and coordinated programming work

The follow-up confirms that the conditions for effective and coordinated programming work is at risk of being impeded

- Because the Swedish programme structure is fragmented, the fund responsibility is divided over several ministries, and the funds each rests on its own programme that is prepared differently. There are several managing authorities and various programme geographies. Some of the programmes are formulated regionally by regional growth managers. Other programmes are prepared nationally with associated regional plans. These programmes/action plans/implementation strategies are out of time with each other at the regional level.
- The follow-up has captured that it has been very positive with the permeating dialogue conducted between the regional, national and EU level in the preparation of the boundary region programmes. The follow-up draws the conclusion that it would have been very valuable if the other programmers had been able to study the European Commission's ideas that guided the programme's formulation. There is a risk that Sweden loses opportunities for new combinations of efforts and projects as the programmes have been planned and handled based on the same structure as earlier programme periods.

c) Obstacles to multi-level governance and proposals on how programme structure and multi-level governance can be strengthened at the regional, national and Commission level for the next programme period 2021--.

Based on the OECD GAP analysis, the follow-up has identified three obstacles to functioning multi-level governance (1) information gaps, (2) transparency gaps and (3) deficiencies in dialogue and joint action in the processes. In the region (EFNS), there is capacity to work in accordance with the directives for multi-level governance and fund coordination, but there is a lack of resources to work with the fragmented and divided programming with separate processes in time, structures and geographies. Within the region (EFNS), there is capacity to work in partnerships and in multi-level governance both horizontally and vertically, in accordance with the Commission's guidelines for the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and for the programming work. The follow-up assesses that the region has the ability to formulate the regional features, challenges and needs based on knowledge and analysis. There is experience and knowledge about the structural fund system, the basic programming work and experience of multi-year programmes (through Goal 1 2000-2006).

- The follow-up draws the conclusion that there is a need for strengthened coordination between the programming work, e.g. today there is a lack of information about other programming processes including the rural affairs programme. Coordination between the operational programmes would have removed the regional growth managers' absence in other programming processes that have a bearing on the counties' development and growth.
- Reinforced dialogue and process support on the territorial tools is desirable as well as a review of its potential and possibilities in the next programme period.

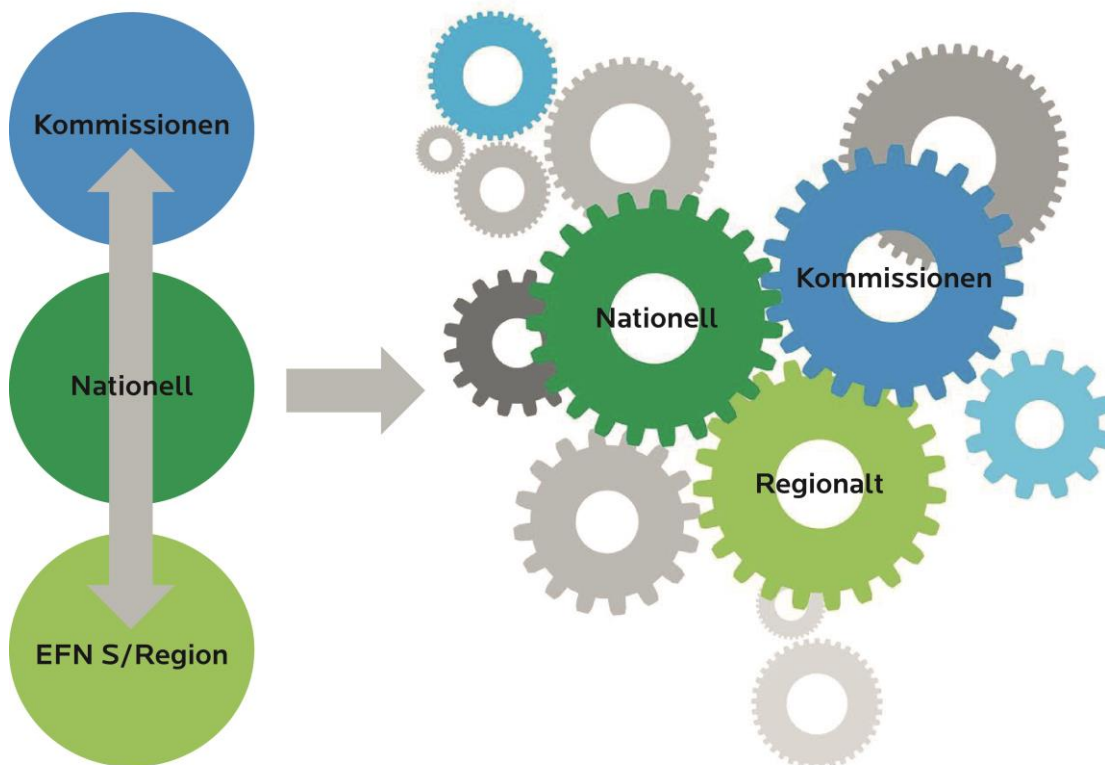
Follow-up recommendations for the next programming process:

1. Reinforced capacity and developed structures for regional involvement

Prior to the next programming (2021-), the follow-up wants to particularly emphasize the importance of the preparatory work being characterised by joint action between regional and national levels, correct information, transparency and good time management. This way, the processes with the preparation of the operational programmes are facilitated. A cohesive action from the national level is desirable for well-functioning programming work. This involves both reinforced coordination between the ministries, as well as a clear responsibility for the structural fund work at a ministry.

2. Reinforced dialogue and joint action through the entire policy process to safeguard the regions' development potential.

Multi-level governance between the European Commission, the member state and the regions needs to be supplemented with location-based knowledge (regional features, needs and challenges) and joint action between the actors. Only then can the programmes be formulated in a manner that frees up the regions' development potential. The location-based knowledge is provided by the regional representatives, and in dialogue and joint action, the right instruments and efforts (policy mix) can be formulated that provide the best effect. A recommendation for the next period is therefore that multi-level governance according to a traditional view (top-down/bottom-up) be developed into a "cog wheel" through the entire policy process - from analysis, strategy and planning to implementation and follow-up. The European Commission, the Member State and the regions act interactively and location-supportively for the adaptation of tools (thematic prioritisations) for the territorial needs and challenges (features such as being sparsely populated).



3. *Use the regional level's systems and arenas for dialogue and joint action*

The follow-up confirms that within the EFNS region there is capacity and experience of working with an emphasis on multi-level governance in development and policy processes. A recommendation is therefore to use already established regional systems and contacts such as EFNS to a greater extent. The follow-up recommends that the national level strengthen the trust in the regional actors in that efforts increasingly take place within the EU today directly between the regions and directly between regional representatives and the EU. Through active joint actions and coordinated processes between the partners of the European Commission, the national level and the regional growth managers, the possibility is greater that every "level's" needs and interests are heard and satisfied and misunderstandings are avoided. It provides a better effect from invested funds!

4. *Stronger knowledge and more understanding of the regional level's way of working*

The follow-up has shown certain weaknesses in the multi-level governance linked to knowledge of the regional growth managers' way of working. A recommendation for the next period is that the national actors be given more information and understanding of Sweden's regional growth managers, which consist of various actors (regional municipalities, regional associations and county administrative boards). It is valuable to dialogue, joint action and complex policy chains that this is well-known and identified so that the "right" actors meet for development and implementation of policies. This is about the regions' highest political management being well-informed of the process.

Europaforum Norra Sverige follows up the preparation of the structural fund programmes 2014-2020

Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) is a network for politicians at the local and regional levels from Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland and Västernorrland. EFNS is a meeting place and knowledge arena where EU policies are analysed and discussed as regards how they affect northern Sweden. EFNS monitors European issues to influence EU legislation, the EU's strategies and action programmes and the EU's budget. The objective of EFNS is to safeguard the interests of northern Sweden both in the European arena and in relations to the national level in matters with a clear European perspective.

In conjunction with the intensive programming work for the new structural fund period 2014-2020 approaching conclusion, Europaforum Norra Sverige (EFNS) wants the results of initial intentions and the process in itself to be evaluated, conclusions to be compiled and reported at the beginning of 2015.

Background

Through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) ¹ and associated programmes, the member states possibilities of achieving the goals in the Europe 2020 strategy will be strengthened. To simplify coordination and implementation of the ESI funds 2014-2020, the European Commission formulated a Common Strategic Framework (CSF). In CSF, the European Commission enables new/developed territorial tools, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and Community Lead Local Development (CLLD) to strengthen the regional and local influence in the implementation of the ESI funds.

A Partnership Agreement (PA) is prepared between the European Commission and every member state. It is a strategic document that aims to enhance the efficiency of the implementation with a focus on coordination and simplification. Another important objective is to improve goal fulfilment for the Europe 2020 goals. The Partnership Agreement shall be worked out in a broad partnership with concerned actors.

In parallel and in line with this, programmes for the ESI funds are prepared, nationally and regionally in Sweden and with neighbouring countries. The programmes shall be formulated based on the conditions and needs that exist in the respective programme area and in dialogue with concerned actors and stakeholders.

The European Commission's delegated act, Code of Conduct, provides a framework for the member states to apply the partnership principle. This is to ensure close cooperation

¹ European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

between public authorities at the national, regional and local level and with private and other sectors in planning and implementation of the ESI funds.

Follow-up and evaluation

For Europaforum Norra Sverige, it is important to follow up the extent to which the European Commission's intentions had the desired impact and how the programming work was conducted. EFNS and the regions included have submitted opinions on the working process in itself and taken a position on important issues during the course of the programming work. The follow-up and evaluation therefore takes its point of departure in EFNS' interests and also seeks to illustrate the extent to which the own influence work, including the drafting of position statements, have achieved results².

In 2014, Europaforum Norra Sverige intends to follow up on the programming work with the following points of departure:

- Results of the European Commission's intentions of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), based on EFNS' interests
 - Stronger coordination between funds
 - New territorial tools ITI and CLLD for increased regional/local influence
 - Simplifications

- Content and formulation of the Partnership Agreement between the European Commission and Sweden, based on EFNS' interests
 - Agreement contents - prioritisations and final direction
 - Working process/dialogue

- Multi-level governance and influence at all levels prior to the programme period 2014-2020, based on EFNS' interests
 - National, regional and local involvement in programme preparation and in planning of implementation and application of the Code of Conduct.
 - Programme structure's impact. National and regional programmes, regional action plans, etc.
 - Administration and implementation organisation

- Additional recommendations/supplements from EFNS.
 - For the programme period 2014-2020
 - Prior to the next programme period 2021-

² Examples of earlier position statements:

- Europaforum Norra Sverige's input on the final negotiations
- Europaforum Norra Sverige's opinions on the preparation of the Partnership Agreement for Sweden
- EFNS on the EU long-term budget and cohesion policy
- Europaforum opinions on the EU's future cohesion policy

Europaforum intends to submit conclusions and experiences made regarding the programming work for 2014-2020 in a position statement in spring 2015.

Adopted at EUROPAFORUM NORRA SVERIGE, Sundsvall 21 February 2014

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Rodney Engström (M) Rapporteur Västernorrland

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The following is a summary of opinions on the Partnership Agreement's proposal on *Thematic prioritisations, Fund coordination, Thematic programme for multi-level governance, ITI, CLLD and Sustainable urban development*.

Is moved to Appendix 2.

Attractive sparsely populated areas in northern Sweden	The significance of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● northern Sweden's resources, geographical position and specific challenges should be emphasized further ● the strategic position and connection to the Arctic policy, etc. should be clarified
Thematic prioritisations	Welcomes the emphasis on limited number of prioritisations. Emphasizes the importance of programmes and efforts formulated in a regional and local context: territorial adaptation.
Fund coordination	Positive to fund coordination - optimisation of resources
	Fund coordination needs to characterise programming work and implementation
	Based on experiences (2000-2006, 2007-2013) regional multi-fund programmes with regional influence and ownership are recommended
	It is important that a direction towards regionalisation and coordination of fund financing

	use occurs during the programme period
	The multi-level principle should be strengthened and the starting value in PA should be to strengthen regional and local ownership, to strengthen the structure and connection between regional and national level.
	The number of managing authorities and programmes shall not be expanded if fund coordination is to have an effect
	Programming, management and decision structure in CSF should also follow NUTSII for the programme implementation
	Sweden should develop the forms of a more cohesive fund prioritisation handling
	Emphasizes the importance of regional dialogue and influence in the entire policy chain
	A more interesting formulation than today is to make it possible for projects to conduct projects over the NUTSII boundaries in Sweden to a greater extent
	EFNS considers that the interaction between managing state authorities and the regional level is lacking in the text that concerns the implementation of the CSF funds

<p>Thematic framework programmes for developed multi-level governance</p>	<p>The regions need to be given the possibility to define and drive the regional growth work based on EU 2020, national and regional strategies</p>
	<p>Europaforum Norra Sverige wants to emphasize the importance of the Swedish regulations being adapted so that regional actors are given the possibility to organise, own and drive thematic framework programmes in the upcoming structural fund period.</p>
<p>Advantages of thematic framework programmes pointed out by EFNS:</p>	<p>Facilitates for small local projects through less administration and simpler requisition procedures (framework programme owner functions as a bank).</p> <p>Develops a bottom-up perspective with locally driven development projects and a social and democratic entrepreneurship.</p> <p>Enables a regional coordination of prioritised themes/efforts linked to the regional development strategy, which in turn stimulates a clearer holistic view of the regional development.</p> <p>The framework programmes open new arenas for collaboration and business development where consensus and new knowledge can be developed through active dialogue with participating projects.</p>
<p>ITI and CLLD</p>	<p>Positive: seen as capacity-building at a local and subregional level</p>
<p>Urban development</p>	<p>Should take place throughout the country. The 5%</p>

	pointed out by the Commission should be set aside and distributed to NUTS2 level
	Before the government makes a decision, it is important that the government conduct a dialogue with the local and regional level on the new tools CLLD, ITI and Urban development

Appendix 3. GAP analysis according to OECD

1. Informations gap	<p>Uppstår när olika "nivåer" inte har likvärdig information, när policies utvecklas och genomförs</p> <p>- Behov av instrument som öppnar upp och delar information</p>
2. Kapacitets gap	<p>Uppstår vid brist på människor, kunskap eller infrastrukturella resurser</p> <p>- Behov av instrument/ verktyg som bygger regional/ lokal kapacitet för att möta upp nationell och europeisk nivå</p>
3. Finansiella gap	<p>Brist på resurser som svarar mot behov och genomförande av anpassade strategier och policies</p> <p>- Behov av att utveckla gemensamma finansiella mekanismer t.ex. flerårsbudget</p>
4. Politik gap	<p>Uppstår när andra nivåer bedriver "stuprörspolitik" som berör flera politik-områden och kräver ett sektorsintegrerat förhållningssätt. politiken är "territoriellt blind (plats-blind)".</p> <p>- behov av mekanismer som på regional/lokal nivå skapar ett integrerat förhållningssätt</p>
5. Mål gap	<p>Olika förnuftsmässiga skäl bland politiskt ansvariga på nationell och regional/ lokal nivå skapar hinder för att anta sammanhängande strategier.</p> <p>- behov av mekanismer som på regional/lokal nivå skapar flerdimensionella ansatser</p>
6. Ansvarighets gap	<p>Svårigheter att säkerställa öppenhet vad gäller metodval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behov av mätmetoder • behov av instrument som stärker medborgarsamverkan