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Press release | 13.04.2011

EU Cohesion Fund in Poland

Commission must oppose Poland's plans to transfer € 1.2 billion of EU funds from rail to road projects

The Polish government plans to get serious with its announcement to transfer EU cohesion funds under the Programme "Infrastructure and Environment" from rail to road projects. As excuse, it cites delays with co-financed railway projects. The monitoring committee responsible has approved this decision, despite the explicit opposition of the European Commission. **Michael Cramer**, transport spokesman for the Greens / EFA in the European Parliament, states:

"Poland is about to set a dangerous precedent. A transfer of EU funds from environmentally-friendly rail to environmentally-harmful road projects runs contrary to all efforts for a resource-efficient economy and effective climate protection. The Commission must therefore oppose Poland's plans and insist that EU funds be used in accordance with environmental and CO2-reduction targets. (1) This is all the more important as so far, 60% of EU transport funds are allocated to road construction and only 20% to rail projects.

Matthias Ruete, Director General for Transport and Mobility at the EU Commission, insisted that the Commission is keen to ensure a maximum injection of EU funds to improve rail infrastructure' and that 'a shift of funding from rail to road could have a negative impact on the balanced development of transport modes within Poland' (2).

The European Parliament is alarmed. All groups in the transport committee signalled their support for the Commission's objections and asked the committee chairman to write a letter to transport Commissioner Kallas.

The decisive factor in developing a more sustainable transport sector is that the limited resources that have been allocated to rail projects are fully used. With the announced reallocation, Poland - which takes over the EU Presidency in the second half of the year - sends precisely the wrong signal. Poland does not lack rail projects with urgent financial needs: The country is for instance lagging behind in the development of the Rail Baltica project. Poland is blocking the upgrading of the section between Bialystok and Kaunas, which would result in disconnecting the Baltic States from the EU rail network. This is just one of many examples of how EU funds can be used effectively in Poland. "

Notes for editors:

1) In its Communication on "Regional Policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020", the Commission states that "managing authorities should give priority to projects that enhance the resource efficiency of transport", see http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/sustainable/comm2011_17_en.pdf

2) Letter by Matthias Ruete from 21st March 2011 to the European Passengers Association (EPF)

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Michael Cramer

Member

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