

Stop intentional reallocations!

Appeal of civic associations to the Government of the Slovak Republic

We, the representatives of civic associations appeal to the Government of the Slovak Republic for stopping the process of misusing the EU funds initially allocated for the support of education, science, employment, regional development and fight against social exclusion in favour of disputable construction of motorways. Such a step would mean an intentional and unacceptable manipulation with the results of a finalized and approved programming process. As a result, above-mentioned areas would continue to be inadequately financed, which would lead to further disadvantage.

Government's plan lacks systemic approach. The process leading to the reallocation contradicts both Slovak and European EU funds decision-making rules.

Intended reallocation interferes in the system of programming and implementation of structural funds. In case of financial reallocation from the Operational Programme Education and Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion in favour of roads it also breaks the ban that forbids financing the same measure with several structural funds. Implementation system of structural funds is based on National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) - the result of a programming process executed in accordance with EU priorities in regional development entrenched in the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006. A sudden and intentional change in the middle of programming period should not be approved without a thorough and detailed analysis and talks with partners – self-governments, civic associations, science, research and educational institutions.

Having approved the resolution No. 73 on 2nd February 2011 on the proposal to reallocate the structural funds Government acted in contradiction with an important partnership principle, which guarantees public participation in planning and implementation of regional EU policy and is therefore according to regulation of the European Union a precondition for the division of any EU structural funds. Even more alarming is that the intended change has not been discussed on the level of National Monitoring Committee for National Strategic Reference Framework, which contradicts the committee's statute that „approves reallocation of financial means between individual operational programmes, whilst keeping the “one programme – one fund” principle.¹

Government of the Slovak Republic did not submit any analyses referring to effects and benefits of the reallocation that would prove its systemic course of action regarding the intended reallocation. This supports the assumption that it is an unsystemic, arbitrary and politically motivated decision. Preconditions for good management are based on analyses of effects and benefits as well as on systemic planning of using the public resources. This could prevent the resources from being used in an inefficient way, which in the end could result in a decrease of the EU resources' benefit to the development of regions in the territory of Slovakia.

¹ Latest version of the NMC statute: <http://www.nsrr.sk/organizujeme/aktivity-cko/2-zasadnutie-narodneho-monitorovacieho-vyboru-pre-nsrr/>

Operational Programmes, which are subject to reallocation aim at the support of small and middle enterprises, research, science, education, increase of employment, fight against social exclusion, development of information society and development of rail transport. Thus, reallocation will remove resources from areas vital for a long-term and sustainable development of Slovak regions, for the stability and resistance of Slovak economics to external fluctuations and crises:

Education, science and research are high-return investments and have a potential to turn Slovakia from a work force provider into a creator of innovations.

The biggest part of economic activity in Slovakia is formed by small and middle enterprises, which should be viewed as the skeleton due to the stability they guarantee on the regional level. Mostly, they use local resources and serve for local and regional markets. Thus, they represent an essential and long-term potential for revitalization and development of under-developed regions.

Currently, the EU funds resources initially allocated for the development of employment and fight against social exclusion represent the only source of strengthening the weakest groups in the population. In economic crisis, more and more people are becoming threatened by a loss of work and long-term unemployment. The gulf is becoming larger for those who cannot fully integrate into the society due to poverty, health or family reasons. In addition, the EU funds are now a single source of financing proven and working tools in the fight against social exclusion such as field social work. Now is the crucial moment to create and develop tools in order to help the weakest to release themselves from their difficult life situations and to support those employers, who seek opportunities for them.

Railway transport is an efficient and environmental alternative to transit road transport across Slovakia. It has a potential to decrease the load on Slovak roads (and thus reduce time loss and road maintenance costs), air pollution, negative effects of transport on climate changes, noise level, dustiness and accident rate. Considering the strategy Europe 2020, development of railway transport is one of the EU priorities also connected with a decrease of greenhouse gas emissions and of dependence on fossil fuels. It is necessary to invest into development and modernization of railway transport and thus build a sustainable transport network in Slovakia. Failing that would be an anachronism and a denial of one of the EU's strategic goals.

Thus, reallocating the EU funds means on highway construction decreases the potential of regional EU policy for the development of Slovakia. Funds are to be shifted from areas vital for a balanced and sustainable regional development in order to build road infrastructure (apart from regional road transport). Reallocation will further deepen unacceptable differences between the regions in Slovakia.

Government of the Slovak republic argues in the proposal for reallocation with a low level of drawing rate in some operational programmes. We believe that in order to help increase the drawing of EU funds in a more efficient way, Government should focus on removing unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles during the implementation of operational programmes and improving their accessibility for applicants. Drawing the resources from funds is hindered by an enormous administrative burden caused by preparing and implementing the projects,

unfavourable financial conditions and very disadvantageous legal status of recipients. These can only be solved by the Government of the Slovak Republic with all its competencies.

We believe Slovakia should do more than just formally fulfil the Union's common goals entrenched in the Europe 2020, which are undoubtedly definitely oriented towards territorial cohesion based on balanced and sustainable regional development.

Therefore, we appeal to the Government of the Slovak Republic not to favour political to the public interest, to revise its plan to reallocate the EU funds resources and to change the NSRF only after a quality analysis of the current conditions and of the possible effects, which might emerge from the intended changes. Government should consider including not only members of the National Monitoring Committee to the talks about the changes in the NSRF, but also the representatives of civic associations, self-governments, research and development and educational institutions.

Civic associations are ready to contribute to the process in a constructive manner and offer the Government of the Slovak Republic their expertise and experience.

Addressee

Iveta Radičová, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

The following list is notified of the appeal:

Ján Figel', Minister of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic

Jozef Mihál, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic

Eugen Jurzyca, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

Ivan Mikloš, Minister of Finance of the Slovak Republic

Juraj Miškov, Minister of Economy of the Slovak Republic

Filip Vagač, Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civic Society

Miroslav Pollák, Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Community

European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

European Commission, DG for Regional Policy

European Commission, DG Research and Innovation

European Commission, DG Mobility and Transport

European Commission, DG Education and Culture

Council of Europe, Social, Health and Family Matters Committee
Council of Europe, Committee on Culture, Science and Education
European Parliament, Regional Development Committee
European Parliament, Transport and Tourism Committee
European Parliament, Economic and Monetary Committee
European Parliament, Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee

Appeal is supported by:

Magdaléna Grambličková, Friends of the Earth-CEPA
Roman Havlíček, CEE Bankwatch Network
Prof. RNDr. Mikuláš Huba, CSc., Society for Sustainable living in the Slovak Republic
Ing. Daniel Lešinský, PhD., Centre for Sustainable Alternatives
Juraj Mesík, civic activist
Ing. arch. Elena Pätoprstá, Hope for Janko Kráľ Park
Ing. Štefan Szabó, PhD., SOSNA
Peter Medved', The Ekopolis Foundation
Miroslava Hapalová, People in Need Slovakia
Ing. Ivan Lesay, PhD., Institute of Economic Research SAS
Agnes Horváthová, Romano kher – Roma House
Mgr. Pavol Široký, For Mother Earth
Danica Hullová, Education Centre for Non-profit Organizations
Klára Orgovánová, Roma Institute
Boris Strečanský, Centre for Philanthropy
Marcel Zajac, Centre for Philanthropy
Helena Woleková, SOCIA – Social Reform Foundation
Irena Biháriová, People against Racism
Soňa Holubová, Centre for Social Work Counselling, Žilina
Anna Verešová, Yes for Life, non-profit organization, Rajecké Teplice
Eva Farkašová, NGO Proxima

Laco Oravec, Milana Šimečka Foundation

PhDr. Zuzana Kusá, CSc. Slovak Anti-poverty Network

Mgr. Roman Džambazovič, PhD., University teacher, sociologist

Mgr. Alexander Mušinka, PhD., Centre for Anthropological Research, Prešov

Marek Adamov, Truc sphérique