



# We need more Green Cohesion as a foundation for European security in uncertain times

**Demands from civil society organisations regarding the future of cohesion policy after 2027**

26<sup>th</sup> March 2025

*Dear Members of the European Parliament!*

Cohesion policy is the most democratic, decentralised, and participatory policy in the history of the European Union. Being close to the citizens fosters public trust and support for European integration. It builds resilience against current and future crises that affect our Union.

**We urge you, Members of the European Parliament, to become ambassadors for an ambitious, green, socially oriented, and effective cohesion policy. This is the kind of policy that Europe needs today. Your support is essential in the upcoming negotiations of the legislative package for the next EU budget.**

On February 11, 2025, the European Commission outlined the key elements of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034. Clearly, the current cohesion policy must evolve to address better the challenges we face today, including the climate crisis, the energy price crisis, the European competitiveness crisis, security crises (ranging from defence to food security), and the growing threat to democracy. These necessary changes should enhance and tailor the cohesion policy to meet the current and future needs of the EU rather than result in its abandonment or weakening.

Our vision for a renewed and strengthened cohesion policy includes:

- More emphasis on supporting reforms, with stronger connections to strategic documents.
- More effective investments in green initiatives, social programmes, and nature conservation efforts.
- Ensuring fair and harmonious development across Europe and its regions.
- Providing more focused and effective support for grassroots citizens' initiatives.
- Enhancing proximity to the people to build public trust in the European Union and strengthen the resilience of local communities.

To achieve the outlined objectives, we recommend the following:

1. **Continue the cohesion policy but improve it.** The reform aspect should be strengthened by better connecting the funds to the European Semester process and aligning them with the national strategies and objectives of the European Union, including the European Green Deal. Additionally, the structure of the funds should be simplified, and the rules made more consistent. It is also essential to revise the concept of earmarking, ensuring that at least half of the EU budget supports climate and biodiversity efforts, taking into account the genuine needs of countries and regions, as well as proven technologies. To enhance implementation, we need to establish realistic call deadlines and provide beneficiaries with more support.
2. **Strengthen key principles.** To enhance the territorial dimension of cohesion policy, it is essential to increase the role of local authorities. Implementing the 3D partnership model - which emphasises a stronger horizontal partnership principle, greater empowerment of regions and states in multi-level governance, and active involvement of partners (stakeholders) in implementing investments - is necessary. Additionally, the refreshed DNSH 2.0 principle (do no significant harm) should be expanded to incorporate a social dimension and, in terms of environmental impact, should promote the best solutions for the climate and the environment.
3. **Increase the budget and ambition of cohesion policy with long-term goals in mind.** The EU needs at least EUR 2 trillion in the new multiannual budget, half of which should support the green transition. Actions must be flexible but set within a framework of precise definitions and measurable indicators to respond effectively to changing needs and challenges.
4. **Strengthen the environmental dimension.** Support for fossil fuels, harmful technologies and half-measures must be excluded entirely - the current loopholes and back doors for financing fossil fuels or environmentally harmful technologies and energy sources (such as primary biomass incineration, run-of-river hydroelectric plants) must be eliminated. Adaptation to climate change must be carried out using nature-based solutions only. In addition, resources for adaptation need to be concentrated - a dedicated Biodiversity Fund should be created to finance activities under the Nature Restoration Law

(NRL). On the other hand, improved restoration after natural disasters requires using nature-based solutions only, derived from the NRL and building resilience to future crises.

5. **Strengthen the social dimension.** The transition must be just, ensuring that investments provide both environmental and social benefits. Cohesion policy funds should effectively contribute to eliminating energy poverty and supporting the development of green skills in the labour market. Maintaining the Just Transition Fund for coal regions and increasing support for citizen energy initiatives is essential. This will help energy communities become the foundation of decentralised and more resilient energy systems for the future.

Furthermore, we believe that already today, on the threshold of the negotiations of the new Multiannual Financial Framework, it is necessary to prioritise cohesion policy funding for projects aimed at decarbonising the economy and protecting and restoring nature:

1. **Just transition of coal regions** - next Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs) prepared based on the experience of the 2021-2027 programming period.
2. **Green skills** - strategic reshaping of the labour market for the green transition.
3. **Distributed energy**, with **citizen energy** as a priority - strategically planned development supported by financial assistance, legal changes, and organisational (technical) assistance.
4. **Environmental education of the society** - enhancing public understanding and support for the transition and fostering pro-environmental attitudes.
5. **Electric transmission and distribution networks, including energy storage** - transformation and stabilisation of the energy system to develop renewable energy sources, distributed energy, and electrification of the economy.
6. **Energy efficiency in buildings and enterprises** - with a focus on supporting energy poverty reduction (linked to support for energy cooperatives) and decarbonisation of the business sector.
7. **Pro-social decarbonisation of transport** - rail electrification addressing transport poverty and decarbonisation.
8. **Climate change adaptation** - enhancing resilience to climate change and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters through nature-based solutions that align with NRL objectives.

The recommendations outlined above are detailed in the publication "[Towards Green Cohesion](#)" (Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network, 2025), attached to this position paper.

We encourage you to actively engage in discussions about the new Multiannual Financial Framework, particularly regarding cohesion policy beyond 2027, and to incorporate our recommendations into your work.

# Signatories to this position:

## Alliances, federations and coalitions of Polish CSOs:

1. Alliance of Associations Polish Green Network
2. Climate Coalition
3. National Federation of Polish NGOs
4. Podkarpacka Federacja Organizacji Obywatelskich PARASOL [Subcarpathian Federation of Civic Organisations PARASOL]
5. Save the Rivers Coalition
6. Working Community of Associations of Social Organisations (WRZOS)

## Polish Civil Society Organisations:

1. Climate&Strategy Foundation
2. Ecological Association EKO-UNIA
3. EKOSKOP Association
4. Ekowyborca [Eco-voter]
5. Federacja Konsumentów [Federation of Consumers]
6. Foundation "Development YES – Open-Pit Mines NO"
7. Foundation for Sustainable Development
8. Frank Bold Foundation
9. Fundacja Ekologiczna Zielona Akcja [Green Action Ecological Foundation]
10. Fundacja Przestrzeń do życia [Space to Live Foundation]
11. Greenmind Foundation
12. Habitat for Humanity Poland Foundation
13. Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD)
14. Nerush Natura Foundation
15. Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Budownictwa Naturalnego [Polish Natural Building Association]
16. Polish Ecological Club - Mazovian Branch
17. Polish Foundation for Energy Efficiency
18. Polish Society for the Protection of Birds
19. Social Ecological Institute
20. Stowarzyszenie BoMiasto [BoMiasto Association]
21. Stowarzyszenie Eko-Inicjatywa [Eco-Initiative Association ]
22. Tilia Association
23. Towarzystwo dla Natury i Człowieka [Society for Nature and Human]
24. Towarzystwo na rzecz Ziemi [Society for the Earth]
25. Workshop for All Beings Association
26. WWF Poland Foundation

