

## **Position concerning EU Commission Staff Working Document on CSF.**

The Brussels Regional Offices for the network of Northern Sparsely Populated Areas / 3-5-2012

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The NSPA network for Northern Sparsely Populated Areas, represents close collaboration between the four northernmost counties of Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland, Västernorrland), the seven northernmost and eastern regions of Finland (Lapland, Oulu, Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu, North Karelia, Pohjois-Savo and Etelä-Savo) and North Norway (Finnmark, Troms and Nordland) with a special focus on the European Cohesion Policy.

The NSPA is a specific area of Europe. Sparse population, harsh climate and remote distances within and towards bigger markets do give competitiveness disadvantages that have to be addressed on European level. At the same time it is an area giving added value for Europe, being rich in natural resources, such as minerals, forests and energy supplies, needed for European industries and economic growth. The NSPA have used EU cohesion policy as an investment tool to address the challenges and to turn obstacles into possibilities and growing clusters of smart specialization in line with EU 2020. For the coming program period of EU cohesion policy, together with the coming Horizon 2020 and rural development, it is of vital interest for the NSPA to be able to continue with the ongoing processes, to unleash the regional innovative potential of the NSPA.

**On the Commission Staff Working Document concerning elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020, SWD(2012)0061, the NSPA would like to deliver the following comments:**

### **Europe 2020 objectives**

- The NSPA consider it especially positive, that the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) is already from the beginning focused on the ambition to fulfill Europe 2020 addressing resources for all regions in all of the EU and the need of regional involvement for this. **(CSF Part I (1.), SWD(2012)0061)**
- In order to achieve the objectives of Europe 2020, the NSPA is positive to more focus on results. We would however, also like to put forward the need of good guidelines based on the targets and objectives in the Common Strategic Framework. Focus should be the long term regional development rather than quantitative short sighted fulfillment of objectives at the project level. In this matter, it is important with sufficient resources for evaluation and follow-up research on both project level and program level. **(CPR Art. 19, 47-50, COM(2011)0615; CSF Part II, SWD(2012)0061)**

### **Program synergies**

- The NSPA welcomes the ambitions for synergies in using different funds in the same program, but would like to stress the importance for the Commission to towards the national level assure regional influence, all the way from making the partnership contracts and programming to the implementation of the programs with common administrative regional bodies to create such synergies on the local and regional level. This is especially important with regard to the ERDF and ESF as common strategic tools for regional development and the possibilities of local lead development and integrated approaches. We welcome the CSF staff working paper in this respect, even though more clarification is still needed to fully be able to make use of these possibilities at the regional level. **(CPR Art. 5:1, COM(2011)0615; CSF Part I (4., 6.), SWD(2012)0061)**

- The NSPA also welcomes the overall ambition of the proposal for cohesion policy, to use all possible funds in an integrated way, to create development concerning the objectives set out for each region. This also implies the need of better synergies between the cohesion funds and other funds, especially the coming Horizon 2020 for research and innovation. However, the statement in the CSF Working Document does to some extent contradict this, saying: *"Horizon 2020 will not support capacity-building and will not take into account geographic specificities in allocating funding"*. It is a good ambition to first and foremost use the ERDF for regional capacity-building. However, the Horizon 2020 does to some extent have to have a regional development perspective to really connect to the cohesion policy, hence also creating true innovation and societal and economic growth. **(CSF Part II (1.3.), SWD(2012)0061)**

### **Territorial cooperation**

- We notice with satisfaction that the macro-regional dimension is more visible in the CSF staff working document, than in the general regulation. Clarification is however still needed of the role of EU-programs in relation to macro-regional strategies, in particular how the territorial cooperation will be set by the establishment of partnership contracts that must include the EUBSR, the Baltic Sea Strategy, for all countries involved in that strategy. The NSPA would also like to look at the possibility to be an area with more interlinked programs within the Baltic Sea macro-region. The NSPA stress that the transnational programs must respond sufficiently to the development needs of the whole of the program region, especially emphasizing the northern and eastern part of the Baltic Sea. The NSPA also support the CSF highlighting the need of creating European transport corridors, green infrastructure and ICT in the macro-region. **(CSF Part II (Annex II), SWD(2012)0061)**
- The NSPA are missing comments about the extra allocation for our areas. The extra allocation is shared with the Outermost regions, but the specific challenges and the potentials of a closer collaboration within the NSPA and its neighbors are not addressed in the CSF. We would therefore, finally, suggest the following amendment to the CSF in order to clarify this matter,
  - ▶ There are challenges and possibilities uniting the Very Sparsely Populated Areas in the North. The specific additional allocation for the area shall therefore, together with the funding for territorial cooperation, be used to address this, unleashing the common regional potential and investing in increased connectivity for growth and European added value in the very sparsely populated areas in the far North. Thus encouraging cooperation across borders within the EU and between regions sharing the obstacles of remoteness and sparse population in geographically large areas with harsh climate. **(CSF Part II (New part in the end under first heading "Cross-border" Annex II), SWD(2012)0061)**

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**Mikael Janson**, North Sweden European Office, mikael.janson@northsweden.eu (+32 485/146966)

**Kari Aalto**, North Finland EU Office, kari.aalto@northfinland.fi

**Kerstin Brandelius-Johansson**, Mid Sweden European Office, kerstin.brandelius@midsweden.se

**Riikka Railimo**, East Finland EU Office, riikka.railimo@eastfinland.eu

**Åsunn Lyngedal**, North Norway European Office, asunn@northnorway.org