

### Mid-term evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund and Just Transition Fund in the funding period 2021-2027

- **Increase the effectiveness of the European Structural Funds**
- **Better align structural funds with needs of all EU regions**

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#### **Preliminary remark**

As representatives of the German promotional banks, which are often intermediary bodies of the administrative authorities in the federal states responsible for the implementation of the European Structural Funds within Germany, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the mid-term evaluation.

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Based on the experiences in the current funding period and with a view to the preparation and design of the next funding period post 2027, we would like to take this opportunity to point out fundamental aspects that we believe are of importance for all EU Member States.

The goal in the next funding period should be, in particular, to further increase the effectiveness of the European Structural Funds and, at the same time, to ensure that they meet the needs of all regions in the EU even better in the face of current crises.

#### **1. continuity**

When designing the next funding period, attention should be paid to the consistency of the programmes and the terms used. This would help to ensure that the objectives and measures of the various funds and programmes are understood in a uniform manner. Clear and consistent terminology as well as seamless integration of programmes could increase efficiency.

#### **2. efficiency and reduction of bureaucracy**

Application and reporting procedures could be simplified by promoting digital solutions more intensive. This would save time and resources spent on managing the funds and ensure that more money actually flows into the projects.

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### **3. flexibility**

More flexibility in the use of funds could allow regions to use the money based on their specific needs and priorities. This would allow for a better response to local circumstances and thus also for more strategic investments.

### **4. innovation and sustainability**

The promotion of innovation and sustainability could be given greater focus by prioritising innovative projects and green initiatives. However, it is important to note that the funding agencies are currently faced with major practical challenges, especially when it comes to proving or establishing criteria and metrics that funding is "sustainable".

### **5. alignment and coordination**

Better coordination between the different EU funds and programmes could ensure that funds are used more effectively and are better targeted to different needs and objectives.

#### About VÖB:

*The Association of German Public Sector Banks, VÖB, is an umbrella organisation of the German banking industry. It represents the interests of 63 members, including the Landesbanken and the promotional banks of the federal and state governments. The member institutions of the VÖB have a balance sheet total of around 3,029 billion euros and thus represent about a quarter of the German banking market. The public banks assume their responsibility for SMEs, companies, the public sector and private customers and are firmly rooted in their home regions in all parts of Germany. With 59 percent, the regular VÖB member banks are market leaders in municipal financing and also provide around 22 percent of all corporate loans in Germany. The development banks in the VÖB provided development loans amounting to 72 billion euros last year. The VÖB is the only credit industry association to perform the function of an employers' association for its member institutions. The collective bargaining tasks, in particular the conclusion of collective agreements, are carried out by the Tarifgemeinschaft Öffentlicher Banken. Around 60,000 employees of the VÖB member institutions belong to it (at the end of 2022).*

Further information is available at [www.voeb.de/en](http://www.voeb.de/en).

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