HISTORY OF EU-COHESION POLICY

#DEINE REGIONALE ZUKUNFT

EU Cohesion policy - what's it about?

Cohesion policy is one of the EU's policy areas - in fact, it is the area in which the EU invests the most. The money and programs financed by it benefit all regions and cities in the member states, but to varying degrees. This is because regional policy, also known as cohesion policy, is primarily intended to promote structurally weak parts of the EU so that they can converge with the already economically strong parts. The idea behind it: All EU citizens have an equal right to an economically and socially good and stable life.

DEVELOPMENT

Founding of the EEC

When the European Economic Community (EEC), the predecessor of the EU, was founded, the promotion of structurally weak regions did not yet play a role. Although Italy proposed a Community fund for the development of underdeveloped regions, this was rejected. At the time, the states were of the opinion that regional differences were a matter for the individual members, but not for the confederation.

European Fond for Regional Development

In 1975, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) came into force. Member states were able to use this fund to reimburse subsidies that they invested in regional policy in their own countries. However, a common political strategy was still lacking.

Enlargement to the South

In the mid-1980s, Spain and Portugal wanted to join the EU, but imposed one condition: they demanded support in catching up economically with the richer EU countries. At the same time, new findings in the theory of international trade supported these demands, so that a common EU regional policy was established. Funding for the ERDF was massively increased. And the European social and agricultural funds were also geared towards supporting lagging regions.

Founding of the monetary union

Cohesion policy was further expanded when a monetary union was created - i.e. with the introduction of the euro. Here, too, the reasoning was that a monetary union would not benefit some countries without additional support. These included Portugal, Spain, Greece and Ireland. The Cohesion Fund was created for them, through which they received subsidies for environmental and transport policy. The other funds were also increased financially. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993, which established the EU in its current form, also included the strengthening of social and economic cohesion as a new objective.

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Enlargement to the East

Many Eastern European countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Compared to the Western and Southern European members, their economic performance was below the EU average. If the EU had continued to primarily support economically weak regions, this would have meant that hardly any funds would have flowed into the Western and Southern European countries. Cohesion policy was therefore extended to all EU regions.

Today

Since then, EU Cohesion policy has been regarded as the EU's most important tool. It not only serves the goal of supporting economically underdeveloped regions, but also promotes highly developed regions in order to strengthen the EU's overall economic performance. Environmental and climate targets, as well as social inclusion, are also to be achieved in this way.

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