**Observations on the Partnership Agreement with Romania**

**Assessment of the Member State policy objectives**

1. The formulation of development needs underlying the proposed funding priorities in section 1.3 shall be fully aligned with the development needs detailed in section 1.1, better reflecting the concentration and prioritisation mechanisms stemming from the analysis
2. The proposed results are better drafted towards policy objectives. However, their formulation should better reflect the ESIF interventions and anticipate the future result indicators of the concerned programmes, which should be quantifiable and be able to be monitored.
3. Territorial challenges are suitably addressed in the document, although the regional divergence could be better highlighted in the introduction. However, the territorial approach should be adequately balanced against the sectoral challenges and priorities, particularly in the areas of employment, social inclusion and education
4. On the other hand, Romania should continue the “growth poles” policy, building on its polycentric structure to tackle its critical territorial disparities. This policy has a broader objective than urban development and Romania is firmly invited to make use of the flexible and result oriented instrument of the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs) in this respect, providing an ideal framework for encompassing and supporting comprehensive and consistent territorial development strategies.
5. Country specific recommendations (CSRs) should be highlighted within the relevant thematic chapters, in section 1.1 where addressed. In particular, the Partnership Agreement should state how the ESI Funds will support the delivery of the relevant country-specific recommendations.
6. Romania proposes a high number of funding priorities, covering a wide range of potential actions and target groups, in particular for thematic objectives (TO) 8, 9 and 11. This approach carries the risk of deviating from a performance-orientated use of the funds and of reducing the effectiveness of operations for the respective sectors, territories or social groups.
7. The Partnership Agreement identifies Roma people amongst the specific target groups affected by poverty and social exclusion and the analysis of their problems is better reflected. However, the Romanian authorities should make sure that the multiple dimensions of the needs of the Roma people are, in line with the Roma integration goals, comprehensively addressed through effective and coordinated actions and implementation mechanisms in order to ensure measurable results.
8. The reliance on strategies still under elaboration raises risks. The issue is relevant both for the overall policy approach and for the specific *ex ante* conditionalities (EAC). Nevertheless, the un-readiness of sector strategies should not prejudice the necessary concentration and prioritisation of the funding priorities; therefore the programming documents should reflect or anticipate, the afferent strategic orientations, as far as possible, indicating the principal strategic framework that will be detailed in the strategies to be defined.