**Proposal for a position paper (Swedish regions 13.1.2016)**

**The significance of regions for the future of European Union**

In order to overcome economic, ecological and social issues the European Union has initiated important strategies such as the Europe 2020, Smart specialisation strategies, as well as applying a strong focus on the 10 priorities presented by the Juncker Commission. Being the operational level, all of the European Union initiatives are heavily dependent on the regional level for successful implementation. Regions also offer political identification and legitimacy for the European Union to the citizens.

The importance of the regional level is obvious: Smaller entities are more flexible in their actions and implementation. People-centred, goal-oriented solutions are easier to fulfil on the regional level than on the level of national states. Hence, there has to be a consistent and equal involvement of all regions in Europe.

The main incentive and toolbox for the regions to implement European strategies is the Cohesion Policy. Over the past years the Cohesion Policy has undoubtedly promoted regional development in line with EU objectives. Together with cross-border cooperation projects, significant regional overall capacity building initiatives – often in cooperation with sectorial and research and innovation funds – have substantially contributed to European integration, development, growth and jobs.

Without the support of the Cohesion Policy and its funding in form of grants, there is a risk that the measures that have been implemented by the regions so far will be severely undermined. Furthermore, the regional commitment to European cooperation is at stake if the main toolbox designated for the regional level is taken away.

As a result, we, the regions of Europe strongly argue for **a continuation of the Cohesion Policy for all regions with adequate financial funding in form of grants also after 2020.**

**Signature:**