SNP MP Philippa Whitford on NHS England’s breast-screening scandal

On Wednesday the health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, announced that an estimated 450,000 women in England were not invited to their final breast-screening mammogram, between the ages of 68 and 71, as a result of an IT failure dating back to 2009.

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Green Party established as the England’s fourth party after local elections

4 May 2018

*** Caroline Lucas MP: Significant step forward with just a fraction of the resources of the bigger parties.**

*** Jonathan Bartley: These results have cemented us as a rising force in British politics**

The Green Party is celebrating what it’s calling a ‘good night’ in the local elections.

Following the results of Thursday’s vote, the party have established themselves as the fourth largest party in England. The Party has, as of 9:30am so far won 9 seats off the Conservative Party and 2 off the Labour Party.

The Party have, at the time of writing, made a number of gains in areas as diverse as Richmond upon Thames, Sheffield and Trafford. The party also won its first ever seat in Peterborough and have kept Sian Berry’s seat in Camden despite an intense effort to take it by Labour.

Party co-leaders Caroline Lucas MP and Jonathan Bartley are pleases with the results, despite a polarisation of politics and media attention on the two biggest parties.

Caroline Lucas said – ““The Green Party has taken a significant step forward with just a fraction of the resources of the bigger parties. We are now established as one of the four major English parties – and an electoral force right across the nation.

“From Richmond and the Midlands to Greater Manchester we’ve had some great results and we’ve still got more to come.”

Jonathan Bartley said – “We’ve had a great story to tell this election and the voters have responded. These results tonight have cemented us as a rising force in British politics and as one of the major four parties in England.

“I want to give a massive thank you to all of the activists who turned out for us week in, week out to deliver this fantastic result. Watch this space, there’s more Green wins to come.”

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European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018: Cultural development strategy boosts the competitiveness of cities and regions

On 4 May, the historical city of Burgos in Northern Spain gathered together local and regional representatives from EU Member States in the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. The seminar was organised jointly by the Government of Castilla y León and the SEDEC Commission of the European Committee of the Regions with the aim to highlight and boost the role of culture as an important resource for for the future of Europe. The discussion on the importance of cultural heritage and its financing in the future of Europe comes timely as the new budget proposal for the EU after 2020 was presented by the European Commission last 2 May. From 2007 to 2013, almost EUR 4.5 billion was dedicated to European cultural heritage coming from a range of EU policies, programmes and funding schemes .

In his opening speech, **Juan Vicente Herrera Campo** (ES/EPP), President of the Government of Castilla y León, highlighted the rich cultural heritage of his region which hosts the highest number (11) of UNESCO World Heritage sites in the world, among them the Burgos Cathedral and the city’s historical centre. “The region of Castilla y León wants cultural heritage to be part of the future of Europe. It's our duty to work for Europe's cultural heritage preservation, also for our economic and social cohesion", said President Herrera Campo.

The SEDEC Commission is currently chaired by **José Ignacio Ceniceros** (ES/EPP), President of the Government of La Rioja. In his intervention, President Ceniceros highlighted the social and economic importance of cultural heritage as well as its role in building the future of Europe and the resulting effect on local and regional development. "Cultural and creative sectors have proved their value even during the difficult times of the economic and financial crisis. In recent years, they have been one of the key sources of employment and growth in many of our communities", President Ceniceros said.

Delegates pointed out that Europe's rich cultural heritage is an invaluable asset: by contributing to the quality of life it determines attractiveness for business, investors and creative and enterprising individuals. Designing cultural development strategies can therefore boost local and regional competitiveness and increase a community's comparative advantage.

Participants also signalled the fundamental role of local and regional authorities in the management, promotion, protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage. Some best practices were presented from the Castilla y León region such as the excavations at the archaeological site of Atapuerca and the Museum of Human Evolution.

The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 will be a key moment of the **next plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions on 16-17 May.**

In the presence of **Tibor Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the assembly will adopt two opinions on **Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture (rapporteur Tanya Hristova, BG/EPP)** and on **Cultural Heritage as a strategic resource for more cohesive and sustainable regions in the EU (rapporteur Babette Winter, DE/PES).**

Note to editors:

European cultural heritage benefits from a range of EU policies, programmes and funding. In 2007-13, €3.2 billion was invested in heritage from the European Regional Development Fund; a further €1.2 billion on rural heritage from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and around €100 million worth of heritage research was funded from the 7th Framework Programme. **For more information click here.**

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EU Budget 2021-2027: cuts to regional funds will weaken Europe’s future, warns EU-wide coalition

#CohesionAlliance: European Commission’s EU long-term budget proposals set to cut cohesion policy by up to 10% and indicate worrying signals of centralisation

Cohesion policy is the EU’s most powerful investment tool and currently accounts for one-third of the EU budget but cuts proposed by the European Commission for the years 2021-2017 would reduce its share from 34% to 29%. Such reduction risks deepening divides in Europe and making Europe’s future weaker according to the EU-wide #CohesionAlliance .

The European Commission **proposal** for the EU long term budget – or **Multiannual Financial Framework** – which sets the EU’s expenditure ceilings for the period after 2020, attracted serious concern among the #CohesionAlliance supporters. The EU-wide coalition was launched by the leading associations of regions and cities – **the Association of European Border Regions** (AEBR), the **Assembly of European Regions** (AER), the **Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies** (CALRE), the **Council of European Municipalities and Regions** (CEMR), the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe** (CPMR) and **EUROCITIES** – and the **European Committee of the Regions** – in October last year and since then has attracted around 5000 individual signatories, 115 regions, 80 cities, 50 associations of regional and local authorities, 40 Members of the European Parliament and 30 sectorial associations representing more than 90% of the EU’s population.

In the proposal unveiled on 2 May, the Commission proposed reducing funding, a separation of the European Social Fund from the other cohesion funds, the introduction of new conditionalities and links to macro-economic governance, alongside potentially centralising investment decisions. These proposals are in clear contrast with the Alliance’s **declaration** that calls for a stronger EU cohesion policy after 2020, covering all regions, preserving the role of cities and regions in delivering the policy, better integrating the different funds and tools, and not submitted to new conditionalities.

” Cohesion policy risks being fragmented and centralised. The proposal to cut cohesion funding downsizes the only EU policy that brings true European added-value to regions and cities. Excluding regional and local communities from having a direct say on EU investment plan and decisions, coupled with separating tools and cuts to regional policy, risks seriously undermining the cohesion of Europe over the next decade”, said the President of the European Committee of the Regions, **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**.

While appreciating the overall size of the EU budget – given the financial impact of Brexit – and the introduction of new own resources, the President of CPMR and of Portugal’s Regional Autonomous Government of the Azores, **Vasco Alves Cordeiro,** stressed that: “ *The Commission’s EU budget proposals meet neither the expectations nor the needs of the European Union. The proposed budget cuts to key policies for our regions, including Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy, are very worrying and will only drive the EU further away from its citizens* ”.

The vital role of cohesion policy was stressed by the President of EUROCITIES and Mayor of Ghent in Belgium **Daniël Termont**: ” *Cohesion policy should remain a strong pillar in the EU budget. It should reach all cities in the EU and empower them to act locally for a more inclusive, prosperous, democratic and sustainable Europe. I call on all European leaders to financially strengthen this policy and use it as a firm basis for a genuine partnership between the EU and its cities.”*

AEBR’s President **Oliver Paasch**, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium, said: *“Cohesion Policy should keep, at least, the weight it has in the current period both in terms of architecture and financing, addressing all EU territories and keeping local and regional authorities involved as much as possible in the definition or regulations, the setting of priorities and its relationship with other EU policies. “*

CALRE President, **Ana Luís**, president of the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous Region of The Azores, pointed out that *: “The EU’s proposal for the next multiannual financial framework is a clear disappointment, especially for those who defend, as CALRE does, a more cohesive Europe and closer to its regions, namely by virtue of a significant reduction of the financial envelope for Cohesion Policy. It is true that initial expectations were not very high, however it was expected that the EU would truly assume its role as the driving force behind integration and present a proposal which, notwithstanding realistic, would also be ambitious and serve as a good basis for the discussions with the European Parliament and the Member States in the Council”.*

The president of the Emilia-Romagna Region and CEMR president, **Stefano Bonacini**, declared: ” *By cutting cohesion policy the Commission is seriously letting down Europe’s towns and regions. Even on the basis of 2018 prices, this will represent a loss of 41 billion EUR for local and regional governments for the 2020-2027 period. On top of this, much more clarification is still needed regarding the future programmes and issues such as co-financing of cohesion projects. What does the Commission mean by saying it will increase national co-financing? Will all regions still be able to receive funding? What does the “rule of law” clause mean for local and regional governments? But every cloud has a silver lining. We are pleased that simplification and flexibility will be two pillars of the next cohesion policy, as towns and regions have long called for. Moreover, the Commission’s decision to include climate, digitalisation, transport or innovation as priorities is definitely a step forward. However, it still needs to say whether towns and regions will have direct access to this funding. “*

The AER President, and President of the Region Västra Götaland in Sweden, **Magnus Berntsson** said: ” *While the Commission’s proposal to simplify the* *cohesion policy framework is welcomed, the proposed EU cohesion budget is less ambitious than we hoped. The proposed cuts to cohesion policy show a lack of commitment to scale up a budget that works towards economic, social and territorial cohesion across the EU. The proposal to take out the European Social Fund of the Cohesion heading also worries us. Such decisions are likely to undermine the ability of the Union to achieve sustainable, inclusive and smart growth outcomes in the future. We are still waiting to see what these proposed numbers will look like, but whatever the outcome, we will work hard with our member regions to use this budget in a way that helps the regions of Europe to stay strong and grow stronger."*

Background note

Worth over €350 billion between 2014 and 2020, cohesion policy – implemented through **the European Structural and Investment Funds** – is the EU's main investment tool that works to reduce regional disparities, create jobs, open new business opportunities and address major global issues such as climate change and migration. It is the only EU policy that covers all of Europe's local communities involving local stakeholders to deliver growth strategies led by shared EU goals.

The #CohesionAlliance is a coalition of those who believe that EU cohesion policy must continue to be a pillar of the EU's future. The Alliance was created through cooperation between the leading European associations of cities and regions and the European Committee of the Regions. It demands that the EU budget after 2020 makes cohesion policy stronger, more effective, visible and available for every region in the European Union. From national, regional and local governments to SMEs, NGOs, schools, universities, cultural organisations, anyone who believes in EU cohesion policy is welcome to join the #CohesionAlliance by signing the **declaration.**

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Rockwell Collins by UTC, subject to conditions

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: "*When we take a trip on a plane, we usually don't think about all the different components that go into building the aircraft. UTC and Rockwell Collins are two of the biggest suppliers of these components to aircraft makers worldwide. We need to ensure that competition is preserved for all of them. We can allow this merger to go ahead because in all the markets where we raised concerns, UTC has committed to divest activities covering the entire overlap between the two companies.*"

UTC and Rockwell Collins are suppliers of aerospace systems and equipment to aircraft producers such as Airbus and Boeing. Both manufacture a broad range of products, with largely complementary portfolios. UTC focuses on products such as power generation, propulsion systems and landing systems, while Rockwell Collins focuses on avionics and different cabin interior products.

The Commission’s investigation

The Commission gathered extensive information from dozens of aircraft component manufacturers, airlines and airframe manufacturers during its investigation.

On the basis of its preliminary investigation, the Commission was concerned that the transaction, as originally notified, would have reduced competition in the markets for trimmable horizontal stabiliser actuators (THSAs), certain pilot controls (throttle quadrant assemblies and rudder brake pedal systems), pneumatic wing ice protection and oxygen systems.

Following its investigation, the Commission found that:

- concerning THSAs, pilot controls and pneumatic wing ice protection, UTC and Rockwell Collins are important global players that would have faced limited competition from competing suppliers after the transaction.
- concerning oxygen systems, the market is already highly concentrated, with Rockwell Collins as the leading global supplier, while UTC had plans to enter that market and challenge Rockwell Collins with newly developed technologies.

The Commission concluded that other overlaps and vertical links between UTC and Rockwell Collins’ activities did not lead to any competition concerns, mainly because of the existence of a sufficient number of alternative suppliers.

The Commission also investigated whether the merged entity would have the ability and incentive to use components in its portfolio to shut out competitors, through practices such as bundling or tying. The Commission concluded that the merged entity would have neither the market power nor the incentives to engage in such strategies and harm competition.

The proposed remedies

To address the Commission’s preliminary concerns, UTC offered to divest the following activities:

- Rockwell Collins’ entire global THSA and pilot control businesses, located at several sites mainly in the US and Mexico,
- Rockwell Collins’ entire global business in ice protection, located in a single facility in the US,
- UTC’s two research projects in oxygen systems.

The Commission found that the proposed commitments fully remove the overlaps between UTC and Rockwell Collins in the markets where competition concerns had been identified.

Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns in the European Economic Area (EEA). The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments.

International cooperation

Given the worldwide scope of the companies' activities, the Commission has cooperated closely with other competition authorities, including the US Department of Justice and the Canadian Competition Bureau as well as the competition authorities of Brazil and China.

Companies and products

UTC, based in the US,provides high-technology products and services for the building systems and aerospace industries worldwide. The UTC group comprises the following business units: (i) Otis Elevator Company, (ii) UTC Climate, Controls & Security, (iii) Pratt & Whitney, and (iv) UTC Aerospace Systems.

Rockwell Collins,based in the US,manufactures and supplies aviation and integrated solutions for both commercial and government applications. It also manufactures and supplies a variety of aircraft cabin interior products.

Merger control rules and procedures

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 12 March 2018.

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the Merger Regulation) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly impede effective competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has a total of 25 working days to decide whether to grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II). This deadline is extended to 35 working days in cases where remedies are submitted by the parties, such as in this case.

More information will be available on the Commission's competition website, in the Commission's public case register under the case number M.8658.