

**FOLLOW-UP PROVIDED BY THE COMMISSION TO THE
OPINIONS OF THE**

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

PLENARY SESSION OF APRIL 2016

69th REPORT

N°	TITLE	REFERENCES
SG		
<p>1.</p> <p>DG ECFIN co-lead</p>	<p>Follow-up to the Five Presidents' report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union</p> <p>Rapporteur: Paul Lindquist (Member of Stockholm County Council, SE/EPP)</p>	<p>COR-2015-05112-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ECON-VI/008</p>
SRSS		
<p>2.</p>	<p>Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020</p> <p>Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 1305/2013</p> <p>Rapporteur: Olga Zrihen (Member of the Walloon Parliament, BE/PSE)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 701 final</p> <p>COR-2016-01214-00-01-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ECON-VI/011</p>
GROW		
<p>3.</p>	<p>Upgrading the Single Market</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions</p> <p>Rapporteur: Alessandro Pastacci (President of the Province of Mantova, IT/PES)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 550 final</p> <p>COR-2015-06628-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ECON-VI/010</p>

ECFIN		
4.	<p>Working together for jobs and growth: the role of National Promotional Banks (NPBs) in supporting the Investment Plan for Europe</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council</p> <p>Rapporteur: Adam Banaszak (Vice-president of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Regional Assembly, PL/ECR)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 361 final</p> <p>COR-2015-05066-00-01-PAC-TRA – ECON-VI/007</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>
REGIO		
5.	<p>Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda</p> <p>Rapporteur: Hella Dunger-Löper (State Secretary, Representative of the Land of Berlin to the Federal Government with Responsibility for European Affairs, DE/PES)</p>	<p>COR-2015-05511-00-01-PAC-TRA</p> <p>COTER-VI/010</p>
CLIMA		
6.	<p>Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments</p> <p>Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC</p> <p>Rapporteur: Marco Dus (Member of Vittorio Veneto Municipal Council, Province of Treviso, IT/PES)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 337 final – 2015/148 (COD)</p> <p>COR-2015-05368-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ENVE-VI/007</p>
ENV		
7.	<p>EU Environment law: improving reporting and compliance</p> <p>Referral letter by the European Commission of 2 September 2015</p> <p>Rapporteur Andres Jaadla (Member of Rakvere City Council, EE/ALDE)</p>	<p>COR-2015-05660-00-01-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ENVE-VI/008</p> <p>Outlook opinion</p>

ENER		
8.	<p>Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions</p> <p>Rapporteur: Michel Lebrun (Member of Viroinval Municipal Council, BE/EPP)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 339 final</p> <p>COR-2015-05369-00-02-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ENVE-VI/009</p>
DEVCO		
9.	<p>Protection of refugees in their areas of origin: a new perspective</p> <p>Rapporteur: Hans Janssen (Mayor of Oisterwijk, NL/EPP)</p>	<p>COR-2015-06328-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>CIVEX-VI/009</p> <p>Own-initiative opinion</p>
TRADE		
10.	<p>A more responsible trade and investment policy</p> <p>Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions</p> <p>Rapporteur: Neale Richmond (Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, IE/EPP)</p>	<p>COM(2015) 497 final</p> <p>COR-2015-06626-00-00-PAC-TRA</p> <p>ECON-VI/009</p>

CNECT

11.	Modernisation of the EU Copyright Rules Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Rapporteur: Arnoldas Abramavičius (Member of Zarasai District Municipal Council, LT/EPP)	COM(2015) 626 final COM(2015) 627 final COR-2016-00039-00-02-PAC-TRA SEDEC-VI/009
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<p>N°1 Follow-up to the Five Presidents' Report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union COR 2015/5112 – ECON-VI/008 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Paul LINDQUIST (SE/EPP) SG– President JUNCKER</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>10. The CoR warns that a "one size fits all" solution will not work, as the situation both within and between Member States requires flexibility, which means that the competitiveness authorities must respect national wage-setting mechanisms and not take over the role played by the social partners in this area.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees with the Committee on these points. In its recommendation for a Council recommendation to establish National Competitiveness Boards within the euro area, the Commission made clear that such boards should not interfere with the wage-setting process and the role of social partners at national level, and do not aim to harmonise national wage-setting systems. Negotiations on the recommendation have since taken place in the Council, and the version endorsed by the European Council on 28 June also stresses that the application of the recommendation shall respect national practices and institutions for wage formation.</p>
<p>11. The CoR considers that the competitiveness authorities should take account of all aspects of the business environment in the broadest sense, i.e. including factors such as productivity, skills, innovation, the business environment and red tape. The Committee therefore agrees that the concept of "competitiveness" cannot simply be reduced to a matter of wage levels.</p>	<p>Article 3 of the Commission's original recommendation for a Council recommendation to establish National Competitiveness Boards within the euro area lists more aspects of competitiveness than wage levels. Productivity and innovation play a central role in the Commission's recommendation. In the version endorsed by the European Council on 28 June, the recommendation also proposes a broad mandate for the boards' analysis including i.a.</p>

	productivity and innovation.
<p>21. The CoR reiterates its call for the Commission and Parliament to adopt a code of conduct to guarantee that local and regional authorities are involved in a structured way in the European Semester, the intention being to present a specific proposal in 2016, and undertakes to engage in ongoing dialogue with the Commission on this issue.</p>	<p>The Commission refers the Committee to its proposals on how to further increase the effective democratic legitimacy, ownership and accountability of the European Semester process, as also described in its Communication on steps towards Completing Economic and Monetary Union¹. The Commission has repeatedly stressed that, in spite of positive developments in the recent past, there is room for wider dialogue with and better involvement of the different levels of the Member States, not only regarding Parliaments and official authorities, but also social partners. For example, National Reform Programmes can play an important communication and ownership role if they are focused and different actors in the Member States are involved in their formulation.</p>
<p>28. The CoR invites the Commission to explain the added value of the European Fiscal Board, whose secretariat is attached to the Commission's Secretariat-General. It is particularly important to discuss how to ensure that such a board does not unnecessarily add to an already complex macroeconomic surveillance environment.</p>	<p>Article 2 of the Decision establishing the European Fiscal Board sets out the four main tasks of the Board.</p> <p>First, it will provide an evaluation of the implementation of the Union fiscal framework.</p> <p>Second, it will advise the Commission on the prospective fiscal stance appropriate for the euro area as a whole. The Stability and Growth Pact focuses on national budgets rather than the overall fiscal situation of the euro area. The European Fiscal Board's input will contribute to a more informed discussion of the implications</p>

¹ COM(2015) 600 final.

	<p>of budgetary policies, which will help to achieve an appropriate fiscal stance for the euro area as a whole, within the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact.</p> <p>Third, the Board will cooperate with the national fiscal councils, which will help in identifying best practice and facilitate common understanding on matters related to the Union fiscal framework.</p> <p>Fourth, the Board will provide ad hoc advice to the President of the Commission on fiscal issues.</p>
<p>34. The CoR agrees with the Commission that the forthcoming review of the Six Pack and Two Pack should be taken as an opportunity to work to improve transparency within and legitimacy for the EU, which is particularly important at local and regional level, and therefore calls for the establishment of "economic dialogue" between the CoR and the Commission, in line with the existing dialogue between the Commission and Parliament.</p>	<p>The Cooperation Protocol already provides for consultation and debate with the Committee of the Regions on economic and European Semester related topics.</p> <p>The Committee submits an annual report assessing the implication of local and regional authorities in the Europe 2020 Strategy which the Commission takes into account when drafting the Annual Growth Survey. According to the Protocol, the Committee invites the responsible Commissioner to present the Annual Growth Survey during a plenary session. Moreover, economic policy issues can be discussed in the framework of the technical structured dialogue between the local and regional authorities and the Commission.</p>
<p>36. The CoR notes that the conditions for financing investment in the real economy have been fundamentally changed by the current economic crisis, and highlights the importance of local and regional authorities in maximising effectiveness and identifying obstacles to productive investment.</p>	<p>The Commission has repeatedly emphasised the importance of local and regional authorities playing an active role in the implementation of the European Investment Plan, notably in the context of the identification of productive investment projects and of barriers to investment.</p>

N°2 Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020
COM(2015) 701 final - COR 2016/1214 - ECON-VI/011
117th Plenary Session - April 2016
Rapporteur: Ms Olga ZRIHEN (BE/PSE)
SG/SRSS – Vice-President DOMBROVSKIS

Points of the CoR opinion considered essential	Commission position
<p>1. The CoR agrees with the principle underlying this support programme, which aims to provide – on a voluntary basis and upon request – technical assistance with regard to structural reforms in Member States in policy areas that fall under the competences shared between the European Union and the Member States; it is of the opinion that effective coordination with existing technical assistance programmes at EU and beneficiary Member State level and active participation by local and regional authorities in that coordination with a view to giving the programme a more regional focus are prerequisites for the success of this Programme.</p>	<p>The Commission fully agrees with the CoR as regards the importance of respecting the principle of subsidiarity and ensuring effective coordination between the proposed Programme and existing technical assistance programmes.</p> <p>The Commission believes that the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) fully respects the Union's distribution of competences as set out in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) in that it covers areas where the Union has shared competences (Article 4 TFEU) or areas where the Union can carry out actions "to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States" (Article 6 TFEU), notably in the context of fostering "administrative cooperation". The SRSP respects the principle of subsidiarity since it is up to a Member State to decide to make recourse to the Programme in the first place.</p> <p>The SRSP proposal also envisages close coordination among the various Union programmes and instruments that cater for a "window" of policy support or technical assistance (e.g. the European Structural and Investment (ESIF) programmes, Horizon 2020,</p>

	<p>and some others), precisely in order to foster synergies and complementarity and to avoid duplication of actions/activities, at both the planning and the implementation phases of the Programme.</p> <p>This coordination effort is the responsibility of the Commission, on the one hand, as regards the various Union instruments, and of the beneficiary Member State, on the other hand, as regards the support actions that are undertaken at national level and are funded by Union programmes.</p>
<p>3. The CoR calls for the Programme to be based on a single strategic Union document to improve the institutional and administrative capacity of public authorities at all levels of government; it invites the Commission to put forward this single document which must, among other things, transparently and fairly set criteria to be adopted so as to determine which measures under the Programme are to be prioritised and how available resources are to be allocated, as well as criteria and mechanisms to coordinate existing measures both at Union level, (...).</p>	<p>The Commission proposal provides for a two-stage approach for the implementation of the programme: (a) multiannual work programme(s) will set out the general strategies, the policy objective pursued via the support measures, the expected results and the funding priorities in the relevant policy areas; and (b) annual work programmes adopted will identify the concrete measures needed for implementation and the global financial contribution to deploy such measures in the beneficiary Member State.</p> <p>The process leading to the adoption of the work programme will ensure the coordination of activities and avoidance of overlaps.</p> <p>Concerning the allocation of support to the requesting Member States, the decision to grant support will be taken on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the principles of transparency, equal treatment and sound financial management, based on the following criteria: urgency, breadth and depth of the problems put forward by the</p>

	<p>requesting Member State, socioeconomic indicators related to the policy area at stake, general administrative capacity of the Member State concerned.</p>
<p>4. (...) in view of the division of powers and responsibilities in each Member State and the Country Specific Recommendations that are often addressed to local and regional authorities, the programme must be open to local and regional authorities; the CoR calls on the Commission to ensure that this is the case, (...) (and) that the latter have been involved in putting together the structural reform project in question, while respecting each country's institutional set-up.</p>	<p>The SRSP proposal provides that the request for support may be submitted to the Commission by a Member State, i.e. by the central government authorities. This is done in order to allow an adequate steer, overview and coordination of the request for support (also in the ensuing implementing phase) by the potential beneficiary Member State as a whole.</p> <p>This means that authorities at regional and local levels should feed their needs upstream to the central government authorities, who will be the interlocutors of the Commission for the purpose of the SRSP.</p> <p>Regions and local authorities can be recipients of support under the SRSP since several support actions can or will (also) benefit the regional or local levels. In addition, they can play a very important role in the operation of the SRSP, not only as recipients of support, but also in conveying their needs upstream to the central government in the context of the formulation of a request for support to be made to the Commission.</p>
<p>10. The CoR points out that a high level of ownership of the structural reforms on the ground by the relevant local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society players is essential for the programme to be successful and for it to help to raise confidence and promote cooperation between the requesting</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that the involvement of local and regional authorities, social partners and the civil society in general is key to the success of the SRSP. To this end, it underlines that the participation of the local authorities, social partners and civil society in the ownership and</p>

<p>Member State, the Commission and the other Member States.</p>	<p>implementation of structural reforms takes place primarily in the context of a Member State's institutional and legal set-up.</p>
<p>7. The CoR stresses that financing the programme through the transfer of funds allocated to technical assistance under the European Structural and Investment Funds can only be a temporary solution. Furthermore, it is opposed to these funding arrangements paving the way for subordinating Cohesion Policy to the "European Semester" exercise since cohesion policy has its own legitimacy, enshrined in the European Treaties.</p>	<p>The Commission would like to reassure the CoR that the funding of the SRSP through the redeployment of ESIF does not put the funding of Member State allocations within Cohesion Policy at risk, since the money comes from the centrally-managed technical assistance budget. Similarly, it will not put the achievement of technical assistance objectives under Cohesion Policy at risk, since the Commission has verified that the coverage of expected needs for technical assistance centrally managed by the Commission will not be adversely affected.</p> <p>Moreover, this Programme will only entail a redeployment of funds and will not affect the content or relevance of Cohesion Policy. On the contrary, Cohesion Policy would benefit from an improved institutional and administrative framework, which is the ultimate goal of the Programme. Additionally, the Programme aims precisely at, inter alia, providing technical support for the efficient and effective use of the Union funds.</p>
<p>13. The CoR stresses that the Programme should be considered to be a pilot programme; it recommends that an evaluation be carried out in good time before the beginning of the next financial programming period, starting in 2021, in order to decide whether it would be beneficial to make it permanent, and, if so, whether establishing a fund of own resources to support structural reforms is</p>	<p>The Commission proposal (article 15) provides for the Commission to monitor the implementation of the actions financed by the Programme and the measurement of the achievement of its objectives. In accordance with the proposal, the Commission will also prepare an interim report (by 2019) and an ex-post evaluation report. The interim evaluation report will include an</p>

necessary, feasible and desirable.	assessment on whether funding in areas covered by the Programme needs to be adapted or extended after 2020.
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<p>N°3 Upgrading the Single Market COM(2015) 550 – COR 2015/6628 - ECON-VI/010 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Alessandro PASTACCI (IT/PES) DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA</p>	
Points of the CoR opinion considered essential	Commission position
<p>The CoR stresses that the Single Market is the EU's major economic success and has helped to increase prosperity and jobs. For it to work better still, more economic and structural reforms are needed; it also insists that the Single Market, the Schengen Agreement on Free Movement of Persons and the completion of Europe's Economic and Monetary Union are inextricably linked.</p>	<p>The Commission takes note of the Committee's stress on the need for more economic and structural reform and on the importance of the Schengen acquis and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).</p>
<p>The CoR welcomes the Commission's announced initiative on the European agenda for the collaborative/sharing economy; it reiterates the CoR's conviction that any hard regulatory initiative should have a sectoral approach and take into account the scale of the sharing economy initiative as a criterion for drawing regulatory lines.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for its initiative on the collaborative economy. The Commission communication on the collaborative economy² was adopted on 2 June 2016.</p>
<p>The CoR supports the European Parliament's call for the inclusion of the Single Market pillar in the European Semester³, with a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the Single Market's integration, comprising a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators,</p>	<p>Bringing in more integrated and competitive markets for products and services in the Member States is one of the priorities of the European Semester – as set out in the Annual Growth Survey 2016⁴. These issues are also analysed in the country reports that were published</p>

² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2001_en.htm.

³ See European Parliament resolution on the Single Market governance within the European Semester 2016 (2015/2256(INI)).

⁴ COM(2015) 690 final.

<p>benchmarking, peer review and exchange of best practices.</p>	<p>in February 2016, as well as in the thematic fiches published alongside the Annual Growth Survey 2016. 2015 country-specific recommendations included where relevant a call for action by the Member States related to improving the business environment and removing barriers to product and services markets⁵. These issues are also discussed by the relevant Council formations.</p>
<p>The CoR calls for completion of the Digital Single Market that has the potential to bridge the digital gap between regions, and to further improve access to information, bring efficiency gains, and introduce improved business and administrative models; it highlights that e-commerce and e-procurement generates tangible benefits for consumers, e-government facilitates online compliance and access to jobs and business opportunities for both citizens and businesses, thus contributing to economic growth.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for completion of the Digital Single Market. On 9 December 2015, the Commission adopted measures on copyright and contract rules. On 19 April 2016, the Commission presented a set of measures to support and link up national initiatives for the digitisation of industry and related services and to boost investment through strategic partnerships and networks. On 25 May 2016, the Commission adopted the Digital Single Market e-commerce and content packages⁶, including the comprehensive assessment of online platforms, initiatives on geo-blocking, parcel delivery, revision of the consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation as well as Guidance on the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive. The REFIT of the EU Audiovisual Media and Services Directive was adopted at the same time. On 5 July 2016, the Commission adopted an action plan and established a contractual public-private partnership (PPP) with industry to further strengthen Europe's cyber</p>

⁵ COM(2015) 250 final.

⁶ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-1887_en.htm

	<p>resilience and its cybersecurity industry. In the autumn of 2016, the second part of copyright reform will be proposed as well as the proposals on the revision of the Telecoms rules. Later in the year, the Commission will make proposals on VAT simplification, the Free Flow of Data, updating the e-Privacy Directive and possibly revision of the Intellectual Property (IP) Enforcement Directive.</p> <p>In order to reap the benefits of e-government for citizens and businesses, the Commission is working on a number of initiatives such as the Single Digital Gateway and the Services Passport.</p>
<p>The CoR supports the Commission's intention to present initiatives aimed at reducing the heavy burden that VAT registration and reporting obligations put on start-ups and SMEs; it welcomes the Commission's intention to put forward a legislative proposal on business insolvency in order to ensure that entrepreneurs have a second chance; it calls on the Commission to provide better information for SMEs in a more accessible way through the representative SME organisations.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for its efforts to improve framework conditions for SMEs and start-ups, including a second chance for honest bankrupt entrepreneurs, and notes its call for close involvement of SME organisations as a channel to provide information to SMEs.</p>
<p>The CoR underlines the importance of further opening up of services markets in Europe; it welcomes the Commission's efforts to continuously assess EU countries' implementation of the Services Directive and carry out evaluation exercises ("peer reviews") in order to remove remaining barriers to the cross-border trade of services in the EU.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for its agenda on services, and stresses the important role that its initiative on a Services Passport, likely foreseen in 2016, will have in this regard.</p>
<p>The CoR welcomes the general approach set out in the Communication in relation to public procurement; it notes that the implementation of the common framework for the provision of concessions is</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for its initiatives in the field of public procurement, and takes note of the Committee's views on the issue of concessions, which are not</p>

particularly sensitive in the field of infrastructural services (ports, railways, highways) and key to completing the Single Market.

specifically addressed in the Single Market Strategy.

Regarding the project threshold of EUR 700 million for an ex ante assessment mechanism for the procurement aspects of certain large-scale infrastructure projects as identified by the Commission in the Single Market Strategy, it is useful to recall that projects over this value generally take substantially longer to contract than other procedures (as confirmed by Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) data for contracts awarded between 2010-2014; see also SEC(2011)853⁷ for calculations for a typical project). The envisaged ex ante mechanism will thus be of particular value in reducing delays for such large projects.

A preliminary analysis has been carried out on TED data. Although TED data has significant limitations, an indicative threshold of EUR 700 million has been identified. There are several reasons for that:

- The greatest advantages from such a measure accrue to larger projects;
- over the past five years the average value of the notices above EUR 100 million is around this amount;
- having a higher threshold would focus the instrument only on some Member States. Having a lower threshold, would mean the Commission would dedicate too many resources to such work.

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/docs/modernising_rules/er853_1_en.pdf.

<p>The CoR urges the Commission to apply the "Think Small First" principle, meaning drafting legislation only when it is necessary and with the smallest enterprises in mind. The CoR calls on the Commission to monitor the effective application and introduction of the "once only" principle by the Member States in order to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens for SMEs and citizens.</p>	<p>The Commission has committed to apply the 'think small first' principle, which requires that SMEs' interests be taken into account at a very early stage of policy making. Moreover, from January 2012 the Commission's legislative proposals have been based on the so-called 'reversed burden of proof' – a premise that micro-entities should be excluded from the scope of the proposed legislation unless the proportionality of their being covered can be demonstrated. The Commission actively promotes the 'once-only principle' among the Member States.</p>
<p>The CoR asks the Commission to promote direct participation in business risk and access to innovative instruments for raising venture capital such as crowdfunding.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for its effort to encourage the development of alternative sources of finance, especially for SMEs. The Capital Markets Union⁸ agenda has a specific focus on this aspect, including on fostering the development of crowdfunding. EU financial instruments are also supporting the provision of equity finance into SMEs, including through COSME⁹, Innovfin, Horizon 2020¹⁰ and the SME window of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) fund.</p>
<p>The CoR calls on the Commission to provide better information for SMEs in a more accessible way through the representative SME organisations.</p>	<p>The Commission thanks the Committee for its support for the dialogue between SME stakeholders and policy-makers. The Commission actively engages in a continuous and regular dialogue with EU-level SME organisations. This</p>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/finance/capital-markets-union/index_en.htm.

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/cosme/>.

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/innovfin-%E2%80%93-eu-finance-innovators-new-financial-instruments-help-innovative-firms-access-finance>

	<p>dialogue concerns mainly, but not exclusively, SME policy priorities from the Commission's Work Programme, as established by the SME organisations.</p>
<p>As it has already pointed out in a recent opinion¹¹, the CoR reiterates its call on the Commission to present a legislative proposal for the protection of geographical indications for non-agricultural products in the EU; this would help strengthen the internal market by making products more recognisable and guaranteeing quality.</p>	<p>The Commission takes note that the CoR reiterates its call for a legislative proposal for the protection of geographical indications for non-agricultural products in the EU, and stresses the importance of this support in the impact assessment undertaken as a follow-up to the public consultation on the protection of non-agricultural geographical indications specifically announced in the Single Market Strategy.</p>
<p>The CoR regrets that the Commission's Communication does not announce any proposal in relation to the social economy although it plays a key role in the EU's social and economic development, accounting for two million enterprises including associations, cooperatives and mutual societies and providing 11 million jobs, i.e. 10% of all businesses in Europe and 6% of the employed population; it recalls against this background that the CoR has "(urged) the European Commission to present a legal framework, which would encompass a body of common definitions applying to the different forms of social economy in Europe, i.e. cooperatives, foundations, mutual societies and associations in order to enable social economy enterprises to operate on a legally certain basis and thus</p>	<p>The Commission is currently working with the GECES (<i>Groupe d'experts de la Commission sur l'entrepreneuriat social</i>¹³) on different options.</p> <p>The GECES is currently examining ideas to be given to the development of an adequate financial ecosystem capable of providing effective support for social economy and social innovation.</p>

¹¹ Committee of the Regions opinion ECOS-V-064 on Extending geographical indication protection to non-agricultural products (COR-2014-05386-AC), adopted on 11 February 2015.

<p>enjoy the advantages of the internal market and free movement (...)”¹².</p>	
<p>The CoR considers that the social economy should be supported by means of a general legal framework at European level as well as by developing appropriate financing programmes.</p>	<p>The Commission fully agrees with this point. Facilitating access to both private and public finance is key for social enterprises.</p> <p>The GECES is currently examining ideas to be given to the development of an adequate financial ecosystem capable of providing effective support for social economy and social innovation.</p>
<p>The CoR regrets that the Commission's Communication does not put forward any proposal relating to SGEI, e.g. in relation to quality requirements notably with regard to social and territorial cohesion, although Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU would provide the legal basis for it; it expresses concern that, with regard to SGEI, the Commission has a focus that is restricted to State aid issues only, although these services play a key role in the internal market. The CoR insists that in the provision of SGEI, it is of paramount importance that the public service obligations are based on transparent guidelines and effective controls and aim at delivering high-quality and cost-effective services; therefore, in accordance with the distribution of competences between the EU, the Member States, the regions and the local and regional authorities, it calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to spur on SGEI within the EU, so as to improve Europeans' quality of life at every level.</p>	<p>In 2012, the Commission put forward a new package concerning State aid to Services of General Economic Interest (2012 SGEI Package). The package contains a proportionate and balanced approach for the assessment of State aid for SGEI, and includes a Communication (explaining in which cases public financing to SGEIs is State aid), a <i>De minimis</i> regulation (where financing under EUR 500 000 over three years is not considered State aid), an Exemption Decision (for the assessment of cases with little impact on competition and trade which are exempted from notification to the Commission) and a Framework (for the assessment of larger, more distortive cases that requires notification to the Commission). The SGEI Package is complemented by "frequently asked questions" guidance to Member States and stakeholders (FAQ). Normally, efficiency is a compatibility requirement for SGEIs under the SGEI</p>

¹² See CoR Opinion on the role of the social economy in restoring economic growth and combating unemployment, 3 - 4 December 2015, point 12.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises/expert-groups/index_en.htm.

	<p>Framework. The Commission is annually monitoring State aid to SGEIs, and Member States are sending reports on the implementation of the Decision and Framework every two years.</p>
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N°4 Working together for jobs and growth: the role of National Promotional Banks (NPBs) in supporting the Investment Plan for Europe (own-initiative opinion)

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117th Plenary Session - April 2016

Rapporteur: Mr Adam BANASZAK (PL/ECR)

DG ECFIN – Commissioner MOSCOVICI

Points of the CoR opinion considered essential	Commission position
<p>The CoR is critical of the fact that, while the formal definition of national promotional banks as a rule also encompasses regional banks, in practice the Commission Communication focuses purely on the role of the national level and encourages the creation of new national promotional banks alone. However, promotional banks operating at local and regional level should also be acknowledged and taken into account in the investment plan.</p> <p>The Committee draws the Commission's attention to the considerable importance of giving local and regional authorities a greater say in the choice of financial solutions serving interests at local level. Failure to consider the position of local and regional authorities often results in support for investments which are incompatible with regional operational programmes and local strategies.</p> <p>The Committee notes the existence of significant development disparities between individual promotional systems at national</p>	<p>The Commission considers the role of the national promotional banks and institutions as key in the implementation of the Investment Plan due to their complementary product ranges and geographic reach. Their experience and capabilities at regional level are beneficial and essential for the maximisation of the impact of public funds.</p> <p>National Promotional Banks (NPBs) are defined in Article 2(3) of the Regulation on the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the European Investment Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal (the EFSI Regulation)¹⁴ as legal entities carrying out financial activities on a professional basis which are given a mandate by a Member State or a Member State's entity at central, regional or local level, to carry out development or promotional activities.</p> <p>This definition comprises NPBs in very different forms, distinctive promotional</p>

¹⁴ Regulation (EU) 2015/1017 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 June 2016 on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the European Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 – the European Fund for Strategic Investments (OJ L 169, 1.7.2015, p.1).

<p>level, resulting in a systemic deficit in countries and regions with a less developed culture of this type of banking; the outcome of all this could be that national promotional banks might not always provide enough support for local authorities and enterprises. These banks should further decentralise the services they offer.</p>	<p>products being offered according to country specific needs.</p> <p>As mentioned in the Commission Communication "Working together for jobs and growth: The role of National Promotional Banks (NPBs) in supporting the Investment Plan for Europe"¹⁵, it remains up to individual Member States to decide whether an NPB should be established, as well as on its shape and form, which could include regional banks.</p> <p>The Communication encourages the creation of national promotional institutions, as there are Member States that do not yet have an NPB (e.g. Cyprus, Greece, Malta). The creation of promotional banks operating at local and regional level and providing tailored services is equally encouraged.</p> <p>The regional reach and capabilities of the promotional banks and institutions are also beneficial for the creation of regional investment platforms which supports projects in a given region within a Member State.</p>
<p>The CoR takes the view that decisions on the creation of new institutions should be subject to an in-depth analysis on the appropriateness of creating new institutional structures, so as to avoid any unnecessary proliferation of red tape and waste of resources.</p>	<p>The NPB statutes usually stipulate clearly that the bank will focus its operations on sectors where market failures are pervasive and which are thus underserved by commercial banks or other private finance providers.</p> <p>As mentioned in the Guiding Principles for setting up NPBs, the Commission agrees with the necessity of an ex-ante assessment of the market failure to be addressed by the NPB.</p>

¹⁵ COM(2015) 361 final.

The CoR stresses that the Commission and the European Investment Bank should spell out the role of regional promotional banks and other financial institutions in the system of nascent investment platforms, as a tool to accomplish the Investment Plan for Europe.

In its Communication of 1 June 2016 "Europe investing again. Taking stock of the Investment Plan for Europe and next steps",¹⁶ the Commission stated that the Advisory Hub will be enhanced in order to provide more targeted outreach and support the development of advisory action at local level, as well as cooperation with NPBs. In addition, the establishment of Investment Platforms will be further encouraged, with strong engagement from the Commission, the EIB Group, NPBs and other relevant actors.

In March 2016, the services of the Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) published a joint explanatory note "Rules applicable to EFSI operations with investment platforms and National Promotional Banks and Institutions":

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/financial_operations/documents/efsi_rules_applicable_to_operations_en.pdf.

The paper describes the opportunities for setting up investment platforms under EFSI, and their possible structures and the role of the NPBs. In addition, the paper provides a number of concrete stylised structures of possible investment platforms.

The paper sets out in detail what investment platforms are, differentiating their purpose between geographical (national, multi-national, regional, multi-regional) and thematic scope (mono- or multi-sector). It also illustrates the type of EFSI investment

¹⁶ COM(2016) 359 final.

	<p>platforms can receive (loans, equity and quasi-equity, guarantees), as well as the legal forms that the platforms can take and their governance structure.</p> <p>The Commission, in partnership with the EIB, also published on 22 February 2016 a brochure designed to help local authorities and project promoters make full use of the opportunities of combining the EFSI and European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds):</p> <p>http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/thefunds/fin_inst/pdf/efsi_esif_comp1_en.pdf.</p> <p>It provides an overview of the possible combinations of EFSI and ESI Funds, either at project level or through a financial instrument such as an investment platform.</p>
<p>The CoR believes that the principle of cooperation between regional or local promotional banks and other financial institutions, on the one hand, and the European Investment Advisory Hub, on the other, should be spelt out and explored. The European Investment Advisory Hub should, in particular, support local authorities and local promotional banks in preparing projects, provide advice on financial engineering and support knowledge transfer. The advisory hub should also have the possibility of signing partnership agreements with regional banks too, not only national banks.</p>	<p>The European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH) is a joint initiative of the Commission and the EIB. The Hub provides a single access point to wide ranging advisory support for projects and investments engaging with public and private promoters at all levels of the project cycle, from upstream project identification, through to planning and preparation to implementation. The Advisory Hub is managed by the EIB and builds on a network of partner institutions, including NPBs. The Advisory Hub started operating on 1 September 2015. Promoters can apply for advisory support by visiting the website: http://www.eib.org/eiah.</p> <p>The Commission is currently working with the EIB to create a brochure on EIAH which will be distributed to the national authorities and will also reach</p>

	the project promoters.
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<p>N°5 Concrete steps for implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU COR 2015/5511 - COTER-VI/010 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Hella DUNGER-LÖPER (DE/PES) DG REGIO – Commissioner CRETU</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>The CoR underlines that EU policies must not encourage a competitive relationship between urban and rural dimensions in so far as they are integrated geographically, administratively and in terms of functional and thematic policies.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees. Indeed, a growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature, but require a wider territorial solution, cooperation with functional urban areas and urban-rural linkages. Therefore, it is foreseen that the Partnerships shall consider the relevance of a number of cross-cutting issues for the selected priority themes such as the urban-rural, urban-urban and cross-border cooperation.</p>
<p>The CoR notes that the EU Urban Agenda should also provide guidance for the EU's negotiation positions with a view to the Habitat III conference, Quito, in October 2016.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees and is working on the two processes in parallel. In addition, the Commission considers that the Urban Agenda for the EU could become a key EU delivery instrument of the New Urban Agenda prepared in the frame of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).</p>
<p>The CoR asks that the Commission plays a strong and binding role in dealing with coordination. This includes the appointment of the First Vice-President as coordinator of the EU Urban Agenda, who through his role would also guarantee a close link with the Better Regulation agenda.</p>	<p>The Urban Agenda for the EU is based on partnership. It is not EU-led (community approach), Member State-led (inter-governmental), city-led nor stakeholder-led. It is real multi-level governance, in full respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Commission is ready to work on the Urban Agenda for the EU but cannot lead the process alone. In addition, the participation to</p>

	<p>the Urban Agenda for the EU is voluntary and its actions are non-binding.</p>
<p>The CoR continues to call for a systematic review of ways of improving support for towns, cities and their functional areas.</p>	<p>The Commission will prepare a one-stop-shop which will aim at becoming a single entry point for cities and stakeholders providing complete, reliable and customised information on EU urban initiatives. Ultimately, the objective is to have a more coherent approach within the Commission by reinforcing complementarities, avoiding bottlenecks and building on synergies. This will be linked to the 'European Investment Advisory Hub and European Investment Project Portal' (set up in the context of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)).</p>
<p>The CoR recommends the use of the Investment Advisory Hub set up at the European Investment Bank in order to be able to make systematic use of the EIB's financing instruments for towns and cities.</p>	<p><i>Please see above.</i></p>
<p>The CoR asks the Commission for a White Paper that assesses and systematises the results of the thematic partnerships and describes the elements of better governance.</p>	<p>The Commission will consider the appropriate means and timeframe for reporting to the Council on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda for the EU.</p>

<p>N°6 Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments COM(2015) 337 final – COR 2015/5368-00 – ENVE-VI/007 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Marco DUS (IT/PES) DG CLIMA – Commissioner Arias Cañete</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>Amendment 1: Recital 6</p> <p>To ensure that the EU ETS operates as effectively as possible, the common objective should be to continue gradually increasing the allowances to be auctioned.</p> <p>Amendment 7: Article 1(4)(a)</p> <p>From 2021 onwards, the share of allowances to be auctioned by Member States shall be at least 57%. In order to ensure that the EU ETS operates as effectively as possible, a mandatory increase in the percentage of allowances to be auctioned could be envisaged only if the international situation allows this without jeopardising the competitiveness of European industry.</p>	<p>The Commission's proposal for the revision of the EU Emission Trading System (ETS) is based on the strategic guidance of the European Council in the context of the 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework (October 2014). In particular, the European Council agreed that the share of allowances to be auctioned under the EU ETS post-2020 should not be reduced.</p> <p>Over the current trading period (2013-2020), 57% of the total amount of allowances will be auctioned. The share of allowances to be auctioned is therefore proposed to remain the same after 2020, at 57%. Fixing the auction share in legislation has positive impacts on transparency, predictability and the functioning of the carbon market.</p> <p>As noted in the assessment of the implications of the Paris agreement, the Commission acknowledges that the risk of carbon leakage currently remains for some industries, but also that these provisions will be kept under review in the coming decade.</p>
<p>Amendment 2: Recital 9</p> <p>Each Member State should set a minimum percentage threshold of at least 20% of auction revenues to be managed directly by the local and</p>	<p>In accordance with the Commission's proposal, Member States will continue to determine the use of auction revenues. The proposal for the revision of the ETS post-2020 envisages that at least 50% of the revenues should be used for climate</p>

<p>regional authorities, for climate mitigation, for example in relation to hydrogeological risks, which these authorities are increasingly required to manage, and for appropriate adaptation of electricity and thermal transmission infrastructure to the growing possibilities of producing energy from renewable sources. It should also be possible to use revenues from emissions trading in the Member States to prevent local and regional climate risks and protect against and adapt to the effects of climate change.</p>	<p>and energy-related purposes.</p> <p>The current Directive already contains a list of such recommended purposes to tackle climate change in the EU, such as, <i>inter alia</i>, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to fund research and development as well as demonstration projects for reducing emissions and for adaptation to climate change. It can also be used to develop renewable energies and other technologies, contributing to the transition to a safe and sustainable low-carbon economy.</p>
<p>Amendment 4: Recital 11</p> <p>Similarly, the Modernisation Fund should be open to NUTS2 regions in Member States with clear internal imbalances, in order to boost the revitalisation and modernisation of the energy sector.</p> <p>The distribution of funds will be conducted in line with the principle of subsidiarity and in respect of the right of the Member States to determine their own energy sources.</p>	<p>The Commission proposal reflects the guidance of the European Council, stating that the aim of the Modernisation Fund is to address particularly high additional investment needs in low income Member States, i.e. GDP per capita below 60% of the EU average.</p> <p>The CoR recommendation to extend the support to NUTS2-level would widen the eligibility to include (regions in) other Member States beyond those with a GDP per capita of less than 60% of the EU average. This would not be in line with the agreement reached by European leaders in October 2014. NUTS2 regions are eligible to receive funding from other EU funds. In particular, regional GDP per capita is a criterion to determine regional eligibility for support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).</p> <p>The proposed governance arrangements reflect the European Council conclusions, clearly underlining that the use of funds should be fully transparent.</p>

<p>Amendment 6: New recital 13a</p> <p>The Paris Agreement reached during COP21 requires an effort to be made by all of the parties to that agreement to ensure that it is ratified and implemented quickly and in a more ambitious way. Greater emphasis should thus be placed on all initiatives or campaigns, including those of the local and regional level or geared towards it, which can contribute to achieving the targets set for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. A tool for monitoring environmental policies and sharing best practices and projects implemented at regional and local levels (e.g. linked to the Covenant of Mayors) could help to further subsidiarity and ensure that all tiers of government shoulder their responsibilities.</p>	<p>As noted in the assessment of the implications of the Paris Agreement, the Commission acknowledges that the low-carbon transition should be mainstreamed through all sectors and levels of governance. Therefore, work at city level and urban policies will be further intensified, including on supporting actions developed by the Covenant of Mayors and the setting up of a "one stop shop" for local authorities. This should allow local authorities to more effectively contribute to the EU's low-carbon transition.</p> <p>Implementing EU climate and energy objectives at the local and regional level require an integrated approach to tackling mitigation and adaptation to climate change, broader than the revision of the ETS Directive.</p>
<p>Amendment 9: Article 1(6) new Article 10c point 1</p> <p>By derogation from Article 10a(1) to (5), Member States and NUTS2 regions in Member States with clear internal imbalances which had in 2013 a GDP per capita in euros at market prices below 60% of the Union average may give a transitional free allocation to installations for electricity production for the modernisation of the energy sector.</p>	<p>The Commission proposal reflects the guidance of the European Council, stating that Member States with a GDP per capita below 60% of the EU average may opt to continue to give free allowances to the energy sector up to 2030.</p> <p>The CoR recommendation to extend the support to NUTS2-level is not in line with the European Council conclusions of October 2014.</p> <p>NUTS2 regions are eligible to receive funding from other EU funds. In particular, regional GDP per capita is a criterion to determine regional eligibility for support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).</p>

<p>N°7 EU environment law: improving reporting and compliance (outlook opinion) COR 2015/5660 - ENVE-VI/008 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Andres JAADLA (EE/ALDE) DG ENV - Commissioner VELLA</p>	
<p>Points of the COR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>The CoR urges the Commission to explore efficiency gains and address unnecessary administrative burden in environmental monitoring and reporting (M&R) in particular by automatising of the reporting tools, and by looking at synergies across reporting obligations under different directives; "implementation scoreboards" should be established for additional directives (points 21 and 23).</p>	<p>The Commission confirms that, as part of the ongoing Fitness Check on streamlining monitoring and reporting obligations in environment policy, it is exploring all items mentioned by the Committee. This Fitness Check is due to be completed in 2017. The Commission also hopes to further develop best practice on implementation scoreboards, as advocated by the Committee.</p>
<p>The CoR calls on the Commission and the EEA to further explore within pilot projects how environmental M&R requirements on local and regional authorities can be reduced by ICT and eGovernment without affecting the impact of legislation (point 29).</p>	<p>The ongoing Fitness Check on streamlining monitoring and reporting obligations in environment policy is looking at all the administrative levels involved in fulfilling monitoring and reporting requirements, including regional and local ones. With regard to pilot projects, mention may be made of the following funding instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the LIFE sub-programme for Environment includes priority areas such as governance and information aimed at improving electronic dissemination of environmental information and data-sharing between public authorities, also in a cross-border context; - the ISA² programme supports the development of interoperable digital solutions, which will be available to all

	<p>interested public administrations in Europe;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme also provides for important opportunities to develop IT solutions crucial to cross-border cooperation; - there is also a significant potential in the resources available under the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund.
<p>The CoR supports further development of Inspire as an eGovernment tool to provide the central common format and process for data collecting on environmental spatial information for streamlining environmental M&R; it urges Member States, with support from the Commission, to strengthen the involvement of their regional and local authorities in the Inspire process (points 35 and 38).</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee's support for the development of Inspire as an eGovernment tool. One of the actions (see number 19) in the eGovernment Action Plan 2014-2016 presented in the Commission Communication COM(2016) 179 final adopted on 19 April 2016 is to accelerate the deployment and take-up of the Inspire Directive. During 2015, the Commission intensified its exchanges with Member States on the implementation of the Directive, holding a series of bilateral and multi-lateral meetings which are set to continue.</p>
<p>The CoR calls on the Commission to come forward in the near future with an initiative on compliance assurance, and supports the option of a horizontal EU directive, which would establish compliance assurance provisions across the EU environmental acquis, based on principles as mentioned in the CoR opinion (points 44 and 48).</p>	<p>The Commission is grateful to the Committee for setting out the principles on which the Committee believes compliance assurance should be based. These principles are consistent with best practice that the Commission has identified through consulting relevant literature, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Make it Work, law enforcement networks such as IMPEL and the wider public. As indicated in the Commission</p>

	<p>Agenda on Better Regulation (COM (2015) 215 final), the Commission is working with Member States to improve compliance. In doing so, it is taking full account of these principles and best practice.</p>
<p>The COR calls on the Commission to closely associate the Committee of the Regions with any future initiatives that aim at improving environmental implementation and governance, such as the Environmental Implementation Review initiative (point 65).</p>	<p>The Commission will be pleased to associate the Committee, in particular by means of events co-organised by it and the Committee through the Technical Platform for Co-operation.</p>

<p>N°8 Delivering a New Deal for Energy Consumers COM(2015) 339 final – COR 2015/5369 – ENVE-VI/009 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Michel LEBRUN (BE/EPP) DG ENER– Commissioner ARIAS CAÑETE</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p><i>Introduction of new technologies</i></p> <p>15. The opinion suggests that, in the context of cost sharing between service providers, consumers and local/regional authorities and of investment subsidies, “the transition must be done in such a way as to result in reduced bills for consumers“.</p>	<p>The rollout of new technologies is an important tool to allow consumers to more effectively take control of their energy costs. However, reducing bills considerably requires Member States to reduce the dominant, non-contestable elements (distribution costs and taxes) in the bill.</p>
<p><i>Energy poverty</i></p> <p>16. The opinion calls on the Commission to go beyond the mere "improvement of data collection" and work towards a broad common definition of energy poverty and an appropriate action plan, based on the idea of access to energy as a basic social right.</p>	<p>Consumer protection and action on energy poverty is one of the key elements of the New Deal for Energy Consumers.</p> <p>Achieving comparable and comprehensive data – for the first time - is the necessary first step on which to build sound policies.</p> <p>That said, the Commission acknowledges that addressing the growing levels of energy poverty requires more. Therefore, it is considering further measures to complement the tools necessary for Member States to mitigate the problem of energy poverty.</p> <p>They relate to clearer terminology on energy poverty and safeguarding consumers’ access to electricity in a manner that allows markets to develop.</p> <p>Given the substantial differences among Member States in relation to the scope and the nature of energy poverty, a</p>

	<p>common EU action plan beyond the issues above might not be the most effective approach to tackling the problem.</p>
<p><i>Billing</i></p> <p>33. The opinion calls on the EU to examine the different components of energy bills in order to put together a "standard" bill incorporating a number of elements that are uniform, legible, clear and comparable at European level and which would allow consumers to optimise their energy use.</p> <p>34. The opinion also calls for the final bill to be accompanied by information about the free tools and services that are available for comparing supply offers, as well as information for households and businesses with regard to the protection of consumers' rights.</p>	<p>The New Deal for Energy Consumers states that energy consumers need more information on energy costs and consumption.</p> <p>The energy bill remains an important vehicle for transferring this information to the consumer.</p> <p>The Commission shares the CoR's views on the benefits of clearer and more transparent billing and agrees that consumers could benefit from greater clarity of billing information.</p> <p>A common "standard bill" might not be optimal considering the diversity of consumers and the increasing use of comparison tools.</p> <p>Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that overloading energy bills with information is detrimental to effective communication. We need to ensure that any proposals in that space favour clarity for the consumer.</p>
<p><i>Smart technologies</i></p> <p>42. The opinion calls for the adoption of a framework at European level on the deployment of smart meters.</p> <p>43. It also calls on the EU and Member States to give priority to applied research on managing and reducing consumption, load displacement and management and setting up of smart, safe, reliable and cost-effective metering, distribution and transmission systems, as well as industrial and domestic storage systems.</p>	<p>The Commission strongly supports the deployment of smart metering to enable consumers to be rewarded for adjusting their consumption according to real conditions in the wholesale market.</p> <p>It is considering stronger consumer orientation (right and consumer functionalities) to smart metering as well as a framework to boost the development of demand response.</p>

<p><i>Funding and participation of local and regional authorities</i></p> <p>45. The opinion calls on the Commission to include local and regional perspective in its future actions on energy. It regrets that the Communication does not include local and regional authorities as players in the general conclusions.</p> <p>47. The opinion calls on the EU and Member States to ensure sufficient and easily accessible funding for local and regional authorities and local energy companies for policies and projects in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy generation and use. The CoR calls upon the EU to incorporate this element into all funding programmes relevant to this field.</p>	<p>The Communication has a dedicated chapter on the central role of local authorities, including those that have committed themselves to local, sustainable energy under the Covenant of Mayors and are involved in developing innovative energy solutions under the Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership.</p> <p>Local and regional authorities may seek funding for actions on renewable energy, energy efficiency, smart grids, demand response and other related strands from a number of sources. These include the European Structural and Investment Funds, European programmes (LIFE, UrbAct, Horizon 2020 etc.) and from the European Investment Bank.</p> <p>The Commission supports an energy market with a diversity of players, including local energy companies, operating on an equal footing.</p>
<p><i>Prosumers</i></p> <p>49. The opinion calls on the Commission and Member States to create the appropriate regulatory framework to ensure a level playing field for prosumers as new market players and to create sufficient incentives and necessary safeguards to stimulate decentralised self-generation and fair remuneration for energy production.</p>	<p>Self-generation should be available for consumers across the EU.</p> <p>In addition, the Commission recognises the benefits that decentralised energy sources can provide to the system especially where a good match between production and consumption is demonstrated (self-consumption).</p> <p>The Commission is working on a framework to integrate and facilitate market participation of decentralised energy sources under fair and cost-efficient terms.</p>

<p>N°9 Protection of refugees in their areas of origin: a new perspective (own-initiative opinion) COR 2015/6328 – CIVEX-VI/009 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Hans JANSSEN (NL/EPP) DG DEVCO – Commissioner MIMICA</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>14. The CoR is of the opinion that, in view of the situation described above, what is needed is a combination of crisis management and a longer-term approach, aimed at providing basic necessities and securing social cohesion as part of a process of controlled physical, social and economic development that respects human rights, including gender equality and the environment.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees. As part of the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2015) 240 final), major new programmatic and funding tools that link immediate relief to mid- and long-term support for both the displaced and their hosts are being developed and implemented. These include among other things dedicated EU trust funds¹⁷, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey¹⁸ or Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPP) in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and the North of Africa. This approach is also the subject of the Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final) adopted on 26 April 2016.</p> <p>In addition, the recent Communication on 'establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration' (COM(2016) 385 final of 7 June 2016), proposes a reinforced approach on migration. Based on close partnerships</p>

¹⁷ The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa; Commission Decision C(2015) 7293 final, 20.10.2015; and the European Union Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, "the Madad Fund", Commission Decision C(2014)9615 final, 10.12.2014.

¹⁸ Commission Decision C(2015) 9500 final on the coordination of the actions of the Union and of the Member States through a coordination mechanism – the Refugee Facility for Turkey, 24.11.2015.

	<p>and tailor-made and incentive-driven cooperation with partner countries, the Commission aims to provide strengthened assistance to countries of origin and transit most affected by the current increased migration pressures, and which cooperate constructively on migration management, notably on return and readmission. For the more long-term and structural drivers of irregular migration and forced displacement, and complementing the development programmes already in place, the Commission will explore innovative avenues to support partner countries in their efforts to create opportunities at home for a decent and safe life.</p>
<p>15. The CoR would recommend wherever possible and as soon as possible reducing refugees' dependency on aid, which results for instance from their not being allowed to accept paid employment. It also recommends that efforts be made to boost refugees' self-reliance and for them to be able, wherever possible, to manage their own lives by, for example, promoting options for them to carry out paid work. In this connection, the fact that Syrian refugees in Turkey can now obtain a work permit is a positive development. New approaches are also needed here, for instance engaging the business community. Experts suggest that small cash payments to refugees have a much more positive impact on the local economy than assistance in kind. The Committee therefore calls for this option to be analysed and for the findings to be implemented where possible.</p>	<p>These options were analysed explicitly in the Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), where self-reliance is mentioned starting from the title: "From Aid-dependence to Self-reliance". The aim of this Communication is to put forward a policy framework to prevent forced displacement from becoming protracted and to gradually end dependence on humanitarian assistance in existing displacement situations by fostering self-reliance and enabling the displaced to live in dignity as contributors to their host societies, until voluntary return or resettlement. Cash and vouchers are examples of some of the new approaches devised for providing support which can increase self-reliance and instil a sense of dignity and ownership in the displaced persons.</p> <p>In Iraq, the EU is supporting a sequenced, multi-purpose cash</p>

	<p>assistance programme to help displaced people and vulnerable households in host communities. The objectives are to align government-led and humanitarian cash programming more closely, avoid creating parallel systems and establish close cooperation between humanitarian assistance and long-term support. The cash programme was launched at local/governorate level to build local linkages which can then be raised to the national level in conjunction with the ongoing support for, and reform of, national social protection nets.</p> <p>More in-depth analysis has been carried out in the accompanying staff working document (SWD(2016) 142 final of 26 April 2016).</p>
<p>16. The CoR recommends ensuring henceforth that the establishment, development and management of camps is based from the outset on an urban and territorial development approach as opposed to an emergency aid approach, with an eye from the beginning on positive and negative impacts on the host communities; this approach means that more informed choices will have to be made about the location of camps and subsequent expansion possibilities, the existing facilities available, and the possibility of developing new facilities, the economic impact, traffic, etc., paying special attention to vulnerable groups such as women and children.</p>	<p>The Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final and the accompanying SWD(2016) 142 final) supports this approach. Restrictive camp settings limit possibilities for boosting self-reliance. With an increasing number of displaced persons finding shelter in urban settings, the impact on planning and the provision of services is particularly great in cities. The issue of the growing numbers of displaced persons residing out of camp in rural and urban areas was raised by stakeholders, in particular Member States, host countries and implementing partners, who mentioned the need to adapt and develop tools and methodologies, as well as strategies and solutions in order to reflect this new reality (December 2014 expert meeting, expert consultations January 2016). This is why the Communication</p>

	<p>focuses on building a development-oriented policy framework to address protracted forced displacement.</p>
<p>17. The CoR also points out that access to education and paid work, in combination with other measures for specific groups, such as women, children and young people, is important for two reasons. Firstly, it reduces the risk of radicalisation, isolation, segregation, vulnerability to criminal activities (human trafficking, prostitution, trafficking in organs) and recruitment by terrorist networks; secondly, it facilitates social, economic and cultural integration into the social fabric of the host county.</p>	<p>Indeed, the fact that more forcibly displaced persons now live in urban areas and not in camps also gives more opportunities to integrate. The Council conclusions adopted on 12 May 2016 following the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), envisage that the EU will work together with host governments and local authorities in gradually implementing plans and policies for the socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, within the framework of local and national development plans, noting explicitly that: "Access to labour markets, education and services are of crucial importance in this regard."</p>
<p>18. The CoR urges the EU to help with the provision of mental health care for Syrian refugees, especially children who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder representing a threat to their health and to their integration.</p>	<p>In 2012, as one of the first development actors, the EU funded a project to support the medium- and long-term needs of host communities and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. An early stage integrated approach was critical as the host communities and institutions most affected by the refugee influx were poorly supported. The Commission Communication on Forced Displacement also states that services such as healthcare face considerable pressures, not only due to the situation in the host country itself, (which may be precarious) but also "due to the potential shortage of skilled healthcare workers able to tend to the needs of refugees, such as mental health, post-traumatic stress and</p>

	gender-based violence."
<p>19. The CoR is of the view that the approach should also include planning for the permanent, or at least very long-term, presence of refugees, outside the camps too, and thus their integration within host communities. For example, a part of the resources could be allocated to offering support for socially useful work and the reception of new arrivals. This will necessitate an extensive policy dialogue which considers the particular situation of host regions and of the refugee groups affected.</p>	<p>Efforts should build on what host countries, international organisations and civil society organisations are already doing in order to offer an integrated package of measures: education, basic services, livelihoods, decent work opportunities, private sector instruments, trade and specific attention for the protection of children in particular, and full participation of the displaced with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups. This will require considerable efforts by the EU and the full cooperation of these countries in question, but these are conditions that the EU and Member States, also with the support of international financial institutions (IFIs), including the European Investment Bank, can help create through innovative and effective development cooperation, economic assistance and investment in infrastructure and businesses, as well as political dialogue and action.</p> <p>As far back as 2013, the Communication on the Work of the Task Force Mediterranean¹⁹ called for moving towards larger programmes with the stronger involvement of Member States, a broader set of activities and a much stronger focus on development, including more long term engagement. In addition, "the implementation of Regional Protection Programmes/Regional Development and Protection Programmes should be</p>

¹⁹ Commission Communication COM(2013) 869 final, on the work of the Task Force Mediterranean, 4.12.2013.

	<p>accompanied by strong political dialogue and advocacy efforts on refugee protection and protracted refugee situations with national authorities in third countries, including at regional level". This new approach was first applied in the design on the Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPP) Middle East. RDPPs have since then also been launched in North Africa and in the Horn of Africa.</p>
<p>20. The CoR notes that this type of approach cannot focus solely on refugees but must necessarily also focus on preventing and resolving problems within the host communities themselves. The international community needs to be more prepared than it has been to date to support national, local and regional authorities in shouldering their responsibility for the environment within which "integration in the region" must take place. This must also be reflected financially, helping to maintain the level of basic services and promoting local and regional economic development, for example.</p>	<p>This point was subject to a dedicated section of the Staff Working Document SWD(2016) 142 final, namely 4.2.1. "Constraints related to political context/ political space". There is a need, for example, to improve project baselines and assumptions. The assumptions in many projects are conceived mainly to reflect the political and institutional commitment of host governments and not the needs of the displaced and host communities. Moreover, while host countries may be receiving EU development assistance, vulnerable host communities usually do not benefit from humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>The Communication states that joint and comprehensive country-specific context analyses should include a joint stakeholder analysis of the policy environment and of the institutional frameworks. These frameworks should also include durable solutions prospect analysis and demographic profiling of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and host communities.</p> <p>The Council Conclusions following the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234</p>

	<p>final), also state that the EU will "work together with host governments and local authorities in gradually implementing plans and policies for the socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, within the framework of local and national development plans."</p>
<p>23. The CoR cooperation between local and regional authorities on the one hand, and UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs on the other, needs to be stepped up if work is to be coordinated; with a view to subsidiarity, recognition of and support for public, private and non-profit players from the third sector and civil society which are on the front line in terms of hosting and seeing to the needs of refugees in the regions, guaranteeing a constructive process of integration which takes greater account of regional situations and issues.</p>	<p>In the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), it is envisaged to: 1) Boost engagement with local authorities to increase their capacity in areas such as urban planning, local area-based economic development and service delivery. This could be done through decentralised cooperation (e.g. city to city cooperation); 2) Facilitate cooperation between the private sector and host governments and local authorities in order to boost complementary actions and avoid duplication. This can be done, for example, by helping governments streamline their procedures so that the private sector can set up micro-enterprises.</p>
<p>24. The CoR recommends improvements on a number of levels in order to enable local and regional authorities in countries of origin and the surrounding region to take effective responsibility for maintaining or providing basic services and for tending to the longer-term aspects of the sustainable social and economic development of their regions and municipalities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the institutional environment: clearly defined and appropriate responsibilities for local and regional authorities, with less dependence on central administrations – including the option of working directly with 	<p>The Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), states that assistance must be provided to stabilise countries of origin so that the basic conditions for people to return voluntarily to post-conflict areas are established.</p>

<p>international organisations and countries or regions that are prepared to offer assistance – greater involvement in the preparation and administration of international support;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adequate financial resources to enable authorities to shoulder their responsibilities, by means of transfers, local revenues and/or direct funding from donors; - capacity building at political and administrative level, by means of training and education, exposure, exchanges and support for learning by doing. 	
<p>26. The CoR hopes that instruments similar to the Madad Fund will be made available to tackle the crises raging in various North African countries, which could also (potentially) result in large numbers of refugees.</p>	<p>Several EU Trust Funds such as the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis (Madad Fund) are deployed, for example in the Central African Republic ('Bekou' Trust Fund), and in the Sahel, Lake Chad, Horn of Africa and North Africa region (Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa). They have introduced new dynamics into programme design and development with implications for the cooperation of EU humanitarian and development interventions.</p> <p>Implementation now seeks to maximise the opportunities that new tools could bring to a more cohesive humanitarian-development strategy. The Commission services continue to work on ensuring robust assistance is provided in a flexible and quick manner to address the challenges in line with the needs of the countries concerned.</p> <p>Moreover, the RDPP for the Middle East together with the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis, mark a major shift in EU</p>

	<p>thinking and competence in mobilising development-oriented responses to the medium and long term impacts of forced displacement: (1) This RDPP is embedded within a coherent policy framework of the EU, giving the action consistency with broader strategic EU development and external migration policy objectives; (2) the RDPP is designed in line with the national economic development plans and strategies of the three target countries and the wider United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resilience Forum; (3) the RDPP is an inclusive instrument targeting both refugees and host communities in development projects with the aim of maximising the positive developmental opportunities for refugees and host populations alike; and (4) the RDPP envisages that the economic interventions aim to ensure that refugees can access durable solutions through improved livelihood capacities, self-reliance, economic opportunities, and labour market participation.</p>
<p>30. The CoR recommends that decisive action should be taken under European development cooperation policy to address and endeavour to remedy the root causes of conflicts that force people to flee their own countries, including the lack of functioning rule of law systems, the lack of respect for human rights, religious prosecution and the lack of good governance at the various levels of government in fragile states. In this way the EU can help to tackle the causes that lead large groups of people to flee because their lives are in danger and they see no hope of peace.</p>	<p>The recent Communication on 'Establishing a new Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration' (COM(2016) 385 final of 7 June 2016), as well as the Communication on the role of EU external action in addressing the refugee crisis in Europe (JOIN(2015) 40 final of 9 September 2015), called on the EU and its Member States to commit to do more over the long term to address the root causes of migration and displacement. The EU has demonstrated its commitment to tackle the root causes</p>

	<p>of forced displacement at source by stepping up its efforts to prevent new conflicts, resolve existing ones and address human rights abuses — all major drivers of forced displacement. The ongoing political and diplomatic commitment of the EU and its Member States to resolve existing conflicts and promote respect for human rights worldwide is therefore a key aspect of this agenda, as is saving lives and helping meet immediate humanitarian needs. With the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement, (COM(2016) 234 final), the focus is also on development assistance being included at the outset of a crisis, not only to tackle the root causes but to also address the development needs of the displaced and their hosts. The Council conclusions following the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), look to "forthcoming reviews, including of financing instruments, to guide EU programming, so as to better address root causes in an appropriate manner and to improve long term perspectives for host communities, refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), as well as voluntary returnees". The Commission services and the EEAS were thus called to strengthen the cooperation with partner countries in implementing relevant programmes, in compliance with international agreements.</p>
<p>33. The CoR recommends that political dialogue with the governments of the countries where refugees first seek asylum give express attention to the role of local and regional authorities, and would also draw</p>	<p>The Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), stated that the EU should closely cooperate with its strategic partners and the international community in</p>

<p>attention to the basic conditions necessary for local and regional authorities to be able to fulfil their role and shoulder their responsibilities. Synergies must be established between local and regional decentralised cooperation players in order to facilitate joint international support projects and programmes. This includes implementing the agreements made with the Turkish government and their implications for local and regional authorities in regions bordering Syria, particularly cities in Turkey that are home to large numbers of refugees. The association of Turkish municipalities has drafted some initial proposals in this respect.</p>	<p>assisting host governments and local authorities, to formulate policies that both ensure the legal protection of displaced persons and give them opportunities to become self-reliant.</p>
<p>34. The CoR calls for the promotion of local and regional authority involvement in needs assessments from an early stage, as for instance set out in the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan 2015-2016 in response to the Syrian crisis (3RP). A coordinated approach to assistance is also needed at local level and this requires the active involvement of local authorities at all stages in the development of the aid programme.</p>	<p>The EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises (JOIN(2013) 30 final, 11 December 2013) provides an important entry point for strategically coherent use of different EU policies and instruments in close cooperation with Member States. The comprehensive approach principles translate into acting preventively wherever possible, and into country-led strategic planning based on joint framework documents or equivalent umbrella strategies. These should draw on existing research, risk assessment and management tools to provide a common evidence-base and include, when relevant, joint conflict analysis, joint needs assessment and other related analyses of protracted displacement situations and drivers.</p> <p>In the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final), it is envisaged to include displacement-specific actions in the EU comprehensive approach action plan related to joint or coordinated needs</p>

	assessment and subsequent action.
<p>35. The European local and regional authorities have developed some good practices and expertise regarding the integration of refugees. Therefore, the CoR calls on the Council, the Commission and the EEAS to make use of the experience, availability and networks of Europe's local and regional authorities: the Committee, along with ARLEM and CORLEAP, which it set up, Platforma, and also national associations of municipalities, such as the association of Dutch municipalities (VNG)²⁰. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience with regard to basic service provision, integration and local and regional economic development, not only in Europe, but also in countries of first asylum. A practical approach involving sharing of best practices, comprehensive, targeted planning of provision in their area, based inter alia on scenario planning and taking into account the impact on the development possibilities of host communities, would appear to complement the work of UNHCR in Jordan and Lebanon very well.</p>	<p>The Commission is aware of the experience and good practice developed by European local and regional authorities in the area of both migrant and refugee integration and welcomes a closer cooperation and sharing of information with relevant European platforms and networks in this field.</p>
<p>36. The CoR calls for dialogue with other key players in this field, not least during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, to look further into the ideas set out in this opinion and for these to be translated into policies and programmes. The Committee would be happy to go into this in further detail.</p>	<p>At the World Humanitarian Summit, in line with the new EU approach outlined in the Commission Communication on Forced Displacement (COM(2016) 234 final) and the Council Conclusions of 12 May 2016 the EU confirmed its commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to ensure early engagement and close coordination of political and development actors at the outset of any crisis, to complement and build on the

²⁰ The VNG is conducting a programme worth over EUR 9 million for the Dutch government, aimed in part at strengthening local and regional authorities in Jordan and Lebanon in their role hosting Syrian refugees and addressing the impact on host communities.

	<p>humanitarian actors' emergency and early recovery interventions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to systematically include forcibly displaced persons and their host communities in the programming, design and implementation of international cooperation and assistance interventions;- to strengthen the context specific evidence base and data of forced displacement, including its impact on host communities, for improved policy making and development programming.- to engage with host governments to provide policy support for legally anchoring the protection and socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons in local and national development plans.- to continue to support access to quality education at all levels in crisis environments for host communities and internally displaced and refugee children and young people.
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<p>N°10 A more responsible trade and investment policy COM(2015) 497 final – COR 2015/6626 - ECON-VI/009 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Neale RICHMOND (IE/EPP) DG TRADE - Commissioner MALMSTRÖM</p>	
<p>Points of the CoR opinion considered essential</p>	<p>Commission position</p>
<p>The CoR welcomes the Commission's commitment upon which every significant initiative in the field of trade policy will be subject to a sustainability impact assessment; it reminds of the importance of carrying out ex-post evaluations and highlights that impact assessments and evaluations including appropriate consultation of all stakeholders are crucial for the formulation of sound, transparent and evidence-based trade policies.</p>	<p>The Commission takes note of the Committee of the Regions' appreciation, and will continue to comply with its commitment, in line with the Better Regulation guidelines.</p>
<p>The CoR considers that the territorial dimension of the strategy should ensure that Local and Regional Authorities across the EU will fairly benefit from growth and investment opportunities expected to be generated by Free Trade Agreements and trade agreements in general, as these agreements are described in the Communication. It should also be made clear what Free Trade Agreements might mean in relation to publicly funded activities at local level for safeguarding freedom of association and local self-government.</p>	<p>The Commission has made a public commitment that EU trade and investment policy and EU trade and investment agreements will not interfere with the right to regulate at national, and by extension sub-national, level. There should therefore be no impact on freedom of association or local self-government.</p>
<p>The CoR calls on the Commission to provide a timely assessment of the impact on the EU's budget and EU-funded structural policies (European Structural and Investment Funds, European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, etc.) of trade liberalisation measures foreseen in free trade agreements or deriving from multilateral arrangements such as the</p>	<p>The Commission will do so in line with the overall guidelines on Better Regulation and Impact Assessment.</p> <p>On the treatment of China in anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations specifically, an in-depth impact assessment has been conducted.</p>

question of granting China a Market Economy Status (MES).	The Commission will table a proposal before the end of the year.
The CoR underlines that measures financed under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) are often short-term oriented and asks for increased coordination with other EU policies, specifically cohesion policy, in order to ensure that the current regional disparities within the EU will not only not be further increased, but will in fact be reduced.	The Commission takes note of this request and will seek to enhance coordination, whilst noting that the two funds are governed by separate legal instruments.
The CoR expects the Commission to demonstrate transparency as regards its ambitious plans for future international trade agreements. In this context, it draws attention to its ambition to redefine the EU's relationships with African partners, Latin America and the Caribbean as well as to further intensify the trade cooperation in the framework of the EU's neighbourhood policy.	The Commission intends to fulfil this requirement and notably against the background of the major steps it has taken on transparency in the context of the ongoing TTIP negotiations and beyond, in line with the Commission Communication "Trade for All" ²¹ .
The CoR calls, in accordance with Articles 14 and 106 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and the Protocol (No 26) on services of general interest, for current and future services of general interest and services of general economic interest (including water supply, healthcare, social services, social security systems and education, waste management and public transport) to be excluded from the scope of trade agreements being negotiated.	The Commission would like to reiterate, and in line with the answer given above, that EU trade and investment policy and in particular EU free trade and investment agreements will fully protect the right to regulate at all levels of Government in the public interest.
The CoR calls for strengthened measures to support sustainable development and good governance through trade agreements, multi-stakeholder initiatives and beyond, with an emphasis on free, fair and ethical trade,	The Commission Communication "Trade for All" directly addresses this agenda.

²¹ http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/october/tradoc_153846.pdf.

<p>environmental protection, labour rights, decent working conditions, as well as human rights, health and consumer protection, animal welfare, ensuring the protection of cultural diversity and promoting development through trade, including Aid for Trade and the 2030 Agenda.</p>	
<p>The CoR calls for measures to support consumers in the context of cross-border trade in goods and services with third countries, for example in the form of online help desks which provide information or advice in connection with disputes.</p>	<p>The Commission already provides an Export Helpdesk that partly responds to such a call. The Commission undertakes to give this idea further consideration.</p>

<p>N°11 Modernisation of the EU copyright rules COM(2015) 626 final, COM(2015) 627 final – COR 2016/0039 – SEDEC-VI/009 117th Plenary Session - April 2016 Rapporteur: Mr Arnoldas ABRAMAVIČIUS (LT/EPP) DG CNECT - Commissioner OETTINGER</p>	
Points of the CoR opinion considered essential	Commission position
<p><u>Recommendations for Amendments</u></p> <p>Concerning the Commission’s proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council on ensuring the cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market (Section I of the opinion), in particular:</p> <p>13. the CoR notes that "temporarily present" should not lead to abuses, which would risk turning the portability of cross-border rights into permanent availability of content protected at EU level. This is why services providers should verify the Member State of residence of their subscribers.</p>	<p>The objective of the proposed Regulation is to address cross-border portability of online content services and not cross-border access to these services. This is why the proposed Regulation introduces the concept of Member State of residence and links it to the subscriber. It also provides for a possibility for right holders and service providers to agree on the means to verify that the online content service is provided in conformity with the Regulation. The Commission will assess proposals by co-legislators in this regard in order to ensure that the Regulation is applied in accordance with its intended objective.</p>
<p>17. The CoR underlines the need to further clarify the parameters within which to operate the digitisation of out-of-commerce works and make them available across the EU; it calls, in particular, for due consideration of a number of joint recommendations put forward by authors, editors and collective management organisations in the <i>Memorandum of Understanding – Key Principles on the Digitisation and Making Available of Out-of-Commerce Works</i>²²: for instance, the</p>	<p>The Commission is assessing options including a legislative proposal to make it easier to digitise and make available out-of-commerce works, including across the EU. In that context, the principles of the <i>Memorandum of Understanding – Key Principles on the Digitisation and Making Available of Out-of-Commerce Works</i> and the way in which they can apply to works other than books and learned journals are being given due</p>

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http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/docs/copyright-info/20110920-mou_en.pdf.

<p>applicability of remuneration for right holders that protects their cultural and institutional role.</p>	<p>consideration.</p>
<p>21. The CoR cautiously welcomes the Commission's assessment of further exceptions to be presented in 2016 and, in particular, advocates taking another look at (i) text and data mining (TDM): despite the undoubted benefits that this would have for universities and local and national research institutes, there are still doubts about what data may legitimately be mined, the consequences of inappropriate re-use of the data studied and what the risks would be as regards integrity and privacy; and (ii) remote consultation: since despite the importance of adapting the digital infrastructure of libraries, universities, etc., making protected data available in electronic format creates a risk of direct competition with commercial channels. The CoR therefore suggests that any ensuing negative effects could be mitigated, for instance by introducing some form of compensation for right holders as a means of protecting the cultural value represented by their works.</p>	<p>The Commission is assessing options including a legislative proposal to adapt exceptions, which play a central role in achieving important public policy objectives to the current digital and cross-border environments. In that context, in particular, the need to allow public interest research organisations to carry out text and data mining (TDM) of content they have lawful access to, for scientific research purposes, is being carefully assessed, including as regards the impact on the integrity and security of databases. The general objective is to increase the level of harmonisation of relevant copyright exceptions and enable digital and cross-border uses, while maintaining a high level of protection of rights.</p>
<p>23. the CoR shares the growing concern about whether the current EU copyright rules can ensure that the value generated by some of the new forms of online content distribution is fairly shared, especially where right holders cannot set licensing terms and negotiate on a fair basis with potential users due primarily to the imbalance in the market power of the parties involved; the CoR therefore advocates – in situations where negotiation between the parties is not possible – EU legislative action that creates a favourable environment for all stakeholders, for instance by providing for more contractual</p>	<p>The Commission is assessing options including a legislative proposal to achieve a well-functioning copyright market place. The objective is to make sure that the EU copyright rules enable to fairly share the benefits generated by the online uses of creative works. In that context, the need to increase legal certainty, transparency and balance in the system that governs the remuneration of authors and performers in the EU is being carefully evaluated.</p>

guarantees to protect authors and measures that promote transparency.	
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