**Background document for the CoR stakeholder consultation on the "European Social Fund Plus" 12 September 2018, rapporteur: Ms Susanna Pacheco Díaz (ES/PES), President of the Andalusia Region, accompanied by her expert Ms Luz Picado Durán,
Director General of the European Funds in Junta de Andalucía**

On 30 May 2018, the European Commission published a proposal for a regulation on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). According to the proposal, the ESF+ should be the main EU financial instrument for improving workers' mobility and employment opportunities and strengthening social cohesion, improving social fairness and increasing competitiveness across Europe for the 2021-2027 period. With a proposed budget of 89,7 billion EUR (2018 prices), the ESF+ should merge the existing European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD), the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI) and the EU Health Programme. The new fund will concentrate its investment in three main areas: education, employment and social inclusion.

The European Committee of the Regions has appointed Ms Susanna Pacheco Díaz (ES/PES) as rapporteur for its opinion which will be adopted in the COTER commission on 24-25 October 2018 and at the CoR Plenary on 5-6 December 2018.

The rapporteur and her expert would like to focus on the following questions that would help her to draft her opinion from the perspective of the European regions and cities.

Please feel free to share with us any additional views that are important to improve the draft ESF+ regulation.

1. *What is your view on the legislative proposal, aiming to integrate different instruments into an enhanced ESF+? What do you think about the inclusion of the direct management model included in the proposed Regulation? Do you consider that direct management actions (health and social innovation) should be part of the ESF+?*
2. *What priorities should be supported by the new ESF+? What are your views on the thematic concentration of the ESF+ and the proposed allocations to different specific objectives? (Article 4 in relation to the percentages set in Article 7 of the proposed Regulation)*
3. *Will the proposed simplification measures be up to streamline management, implementation and monitoring procedures? How could be the ESF+ implementation further simplified?*
4. *Are the specific objectives of the ESF+ regulation adequate to the European Pillar of social Rights and objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion, in objectives such as training, employment and social inclusion?*
5. *The ESF+ proposal has introduced a specific objective of promoting socio-economic integration of third country nationals and of marginalized communities such as the Roma? How should the concentration criteria be defined in order to better reflect the distribution of 3rd country nationals in Member States concerned? (Do you think that some percentage of the allocation of ESF + resources should be assigned in relation to them? (Article 7.3 of the proposed Regulation)*
6. *With what measures do you consider that greater coordination and complementarity could be achieved between the ESF + and the Asylum and Migration Fund?*
7. *In the proposed Regulation, Community-led Development strategies (CLLDs) are only marginally mentioned. Do you consider that the ESF + contributes to territorial cohesion? How can this contribution be reinforced in the proposed Regulation?*
8. *How do you assess the link between the ESF + and the European Semester? Do you consider it appropriate to allocate an amount of ESF + resources to finance European Semester policies? (Article 7.1 of the proposed Regulation)*
9. *Does the allocation made by the proposal for selected actions and structural reforms to support youth employment and the transition from school to work seem sufficient? (Article 7.5 of the proposed Regulation)*