



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**RESOL-VII/009**

**141st plenary session, 8-9-10 December 2020**

**DRAFT RESOLUTION**

**on the 2021 Work Programme of the European Commission**

**Submitted by the EPP, PES, Renew Europe, ECR, EA and Greens Groups**

This document is being sent to members in accordance with Rule 15(4) of the CoR Rules of Procedure.

**Deadline for tabling amendments:**

In accordance with Rule 23(3), the deadline for submitting amendments is **3 p.m.** (Brussels time) **on 24 November 2020**. Amendments must be submitted preferably in English, French or German, through the online tool for tabling amendments (available on the Members' Portal: <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu>)

The Helpdesk (+32 (0)2 546 96 97, email: [helpdesk@cor.europa.eu](mailto:helpdesk@cor.europa.eu)) is at your disposal to provide you with any assistance you may need. In addition, a user guide is available at <https://memportal.cor.europa.eu/>

**Number of signatures required: 6**

## THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR)

Having regard to:

- the European Commission Work Programme for 2021<sup>1</sup>;
  - the Protocol of Cooperation with the European Commission of February 2012;
  - the CoR Resolution on the European Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2020-2025<sup>2</sup>;
  - the CoR Resolution on the European Committee of the Regions' proposals in view of the European Commission Work Programme for 2021<sup>3</sup>;
1. Underlines the absolute urgency of mitigating the effects of the global pandemic as the coronavirus crisis is widening existing social, economic and territorial disparities, as reflected in the CoR's first Annual Local and Regional Barometer;
  2. Insists that local and regional authorities (LRAs) must be at the core of the design and implementation of the post COVID-19 socio-economic recovery agenda. The CoR commits to working closely with relevant stakeholders to take stock of the lessons learnt from the management of the COVID-19 crisis so far and to look towards preparedness for the future;
  3. Supports, therefore, the Commission's approach to charting the EU's political priorities through to the annual Strategic Foresight Report, to which the CoR will contribute with data from LRAs across the EU;
  4. Shares the view that the Conference on the Future of Europe must be launched as soon as possible. The full involvement of the CoR, as the voice of LRAs, in all bodies of the Conference would allow the project to be closer to Europe's citizens and to reflect in greater depth on the necessary changes to the EU's policies, processes and institutional framework. The CoR insists that in all public consultations related to the conference, maximum pluralism must be ensured;
  5. Calls on the other European institutions to cooperate with the CoR in developing a pilot model for a permanent and structured dialogue with citizens through LRAs, which could also serve to improve the EU decision-making process;
  6. Reiterates the need to involve LRAs in the design and implementation of EU policies, not least in those areas where LRAs are most in the lead, notably through the proper application of active subsidiarity and the mainstreaming of multilevel governance principles. The CoR welcomes the Commission's decision to enhance the CoR's participation in the Fit for Future platform and commits to contributing to the platform's objectives through the government group and the dedicated RegHub subgroup. Highlights the need for a more prominent local and regional perspective in the REFIT revision;

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2020) 690 final

<sup>2</sup> COR-2020-01392-00-00-RES-TRA

<sup>3</sup> COR-2020-02622-00-00-RES-TRA

7. Reiterates its call for the Commission to closely monitor the application of the Code of Conduct on Partnership in the preparation of the Partnership Agreements and programmes for the 2021-2027 period and to ensure that the involvement of LRAs amounts to full partnership. The principles of partnership and multilevel governance should more closely inspire the governance of the European Semester, particularly as the Semester provides guidelines for the Cohesion Policy programmes 2021-2027 and for the Recovery and Resilience Facility;
8. Will carefully assess the legislative proposals for new own resources, in particular as regards their potential impact on local and regional finances and citizens;
9. Underlines the need to clarify the interactions between the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and Cohesion Policy funding at local and regional level and, regarding the RRF and Member States in particular, calls for the forthcoming national reform and investment plans to be developed both horizontally and bottom up, and encourages a wide array of EU institutional and stakeholder participants to attend the RRF Forum in October 2021;
10. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to using the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals as the basis for building the policy framework for a sustainable recovery in the EU;
11. Calls on the Commission to present within its "Fit for 55 package" an ambitious EU adaptation strategy with a clear focus on the central role of LRAs in climate adaptation;
12. Stands ready to prepare a joint COP26 roadmap ahead of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP26 in Glasgow, aimed at showcasing the engagement of the EU at all levels and promoting the role and contributions of subnational governments in the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC;
13. Highlights the fact that the forthcoming proposal for a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism is closely linked to the review of the Emissions Trading System. In order to prevent discrimination between foreign and domestic products, calls for a careful assessment on how the phasing-out of free allowances will impact EU energy-intensive sectors;
14. Will carefully monitor the implementation of the Just Transition Mechanism and suggests holding a Just Transition Forum in the second half of 2021 to draw the initial political conclusions of its implementation;
15. considers that Multilevel Energy and Climate dialogues should be further promoted and extended to all areas of the Green Deal. Urges the full recognition of the role of cities and regions in the implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation policies and calls for an effective multilevel governance framework through the European Climate Pact. Against this background, the CoR welcomes the Commission's commitment to present a joint action plan for the implementation of the Green Deal, which could include a European Regional Scoreboard to track progress in the implementation of the Green Deal at subnational level;

16. Stresses the urgency of implementing the Renovation Wave strategy and of putting in place mechanisms to adapt that part of the transition to local characteristics and circumstances and to fill existing gaps in terms of financial resources and technical capacity;
17. Welcomes the Commission's ambition to launch a Zero Pollution action plan for water, air and soil as an essential part of the Green Recovery Plan. The action plan should be developed and implemented in cooperation with LRAs via initiatives such as the Green City Accord;
18. Calls for specific targets in the implementation of the New Circular Economy Action Plan (NCEAP) taking into account regional differences, especially for waste prevention and public procurement, since these would stimulate innovation technologies and their market uptake, and for recognition of the important role of LRAs in a more circular society;
19. Commits to supporting the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, while exploring the contribution of LRAs in addressing the decline of pollinators and in tackling the dangerous pressure on our marine environment. The CoR would emphasise the role of land and agricultural practices as well as sustainable forest management in restoring habitats and increasing the resilience and strength of all European ecosystems and natural areas. The CoR supports the European Parliament's call to the Commission to propose a legal framework for mandatory due diligence along supply chains for forest products and products posing a risk to ecosystems that are placed on the EU market;
20. Calls for the full involvement of European regions in the implementation and monitoring of the EU Farm to Fork strategy in order to support the transitions set out in the strategy as locally as possible and to ensure that future strategic plans meet local needs;
21. Urges the EU institutions to translate the new long-term vision for rural areas into an EU Rural Agenda, which should ensure that the principle of rural-urban equilibrium is enshrined in all EU policies, in line with territorial cohesion objectives, and increase the role of the local and regional levels in the governance of rural policies;
22. Regrets the Work Programme's lack of ambition in the maritime domain and emphasises the strategic geopolitical importance of cutting-edge maritime industries and strong coastal and maritime regions. In this regard, calls on the Commission to develop a comprehensive agenda in support of blue industries and maritime regions;
23. Commits to providing input for the legislative initiative for a European green bond standard, as this would be highly relevant to channelling sustainable private and public investment at local and regional level;
24. Highlights the need to address the missing links in cross-border transport infrastructure within the revision of the Regulation on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T);
25. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to presenting a legislative proposal to improve the working conditions of platform workers and to introducing provisions for collective bargaining in the Digital Services Act. Also expects the Digital Services Act to address minimum standards for fair teleworking and digital rights at work, including the right to disconnect;

26. Regrets that no proposal to regulate Artificial Intelligence is planned in 2021, as a follow-up to the recently adopted White Paper;
27. Will develop indicators for digital transformation at local and regional level in order to set targets and a monitoring mechanism for the Digital Decade 2030, addressing inequalities and preventing a digital divide;
28. Calls for a comprehensive EU approach to the security and resilience of 5G networks, as ensuring broadband connectivity and 5G deployment at local and regional level in both urban and rural areas is becoming crucial;
29. Calls on the Commission to reinforce the place-based dimension of the EU's industrial strategy, notably by involving the CoR and regional governments in the Industrial Forum and in the European Raw Materials Alliance so that regions and cities can take ownership of the twin green and digital transitions of their industries;
30. Considering that the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has strongly hit SMEs across EU regions and is exacerbating chronic issues such as unsatisfactory access to finance and late payments, and taking account of the diverse structures and needs of SMEs and the varying economic and institutional conditions across Europe, suggests that the Commission strengthen the local and regional governance of the SME Strategy. For its part, the CoR commits to cooperating with the Commission and the business community in the further development and application of an SME test that is fit for purpose, notably through the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) network;
31. Calls on the Commission to take into account the difficulties faced by local and regional stakeholders which are preventing them from fully reaping the benefits of the single market and looks forward to the updated single market barriers report and the measures that the Commission intends to take to ensure the full enforcement of the Services Directive. The CoR also asks the Commission to come forward with a new improved proposal on the Services Passport;
32. Welcomes the Commission's emphasis on a Fair Economy package and looks forward to the Action Plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights, which should build on greater empirical and policy use of the Social Scoreboard tool. The CoR will support the Pillar's local and regional dimension by playing an active role in the Conference ahead of the Social Summit in Porto in 2021. Moreover, the CoR will work with the Commission on developing the Local Jobs Fairs initiative;
33. Looks forward to the new occupational safety and health strategy framework. In this connection, calls on the Commission to pick up the pace in 2021 in order to finally reach the objective of setting 50 Occupational Exposure Limit values (OELs), originally set for 2020;
34. Stresses the need to involve LRAs in the development of the Action Plan for the social economy, with its strong regional and local dimension;

35. Welcomes the fact that the Commission has echoed the CoR's call for a Child Guarantee, which would strengthen the social inclusion and well-being of children as well as the promotion of children's rights;
36. Looks forward to the strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities;
37. Notes that the Work Programme 2021 provides for the revision of State aid provisions in nine different domains that are of utmost relevance for LRAs. Commits, therefore, to taking an active part in the revision. For that purpose, the CoR will build on the consultation of the Network of Regional Hubs for policy implementation review, which is already analysing the framework in the areas of Services of General Economic Interest and of regional aid;
38. Welcomes the flexibility provided for with the activation of the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact to allow for policy coordination measures that quickly and forcefully apply. Emphasises that this suspension is important for as long as public authorities are faced with extraordinary costs as they grapple with the pandemic and until lessons can be duly learnt from the current COVID-19 crisis and we are grounded in preparedness for future crises;
39. Regrets the lack of measures in the Work Programme to support a sustainable recovery in the tourism industry, a major economic sector for regions and for local livelihoods across Europe and one that has been heavily hit by the crisis. Reiterates the importance of allocating sufficient financial resources to save the sector and of developing a long-term European tourism policy;
40. Calls for clear milestones and commensurate means for the completion of the European Education Area by 2025. Supports the Commission's efforts to instil a lifelong learning culture and facilitate job transitions in the EU, and asks for a "minimum qualifications and skills guarantee" for young people, recognised and validated in all Member States, to be achieved in the framework of future individual learning accounts and a European approach to micro-credentials;
41. Looks forward to fully exploiting the opportunities of the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP) with the Commission to promote smart and sustainable specialisation and to support innovation eco-systems at local and regional level;
42. Underlines the need to support LRAs in the candidate countries for EU accession and in partner countries in the EU's neighbourhood, to help them pursue the EU's strategic priorities and to avoid a widening gap, with the ultimate aim of rebuilding better after the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening resilience at community level;
43. Strongly supports the commitment of the Commission to upholding its leading role in strengthening rules-based multilateralism and to placing the SDGs at the core of the WTO reform; holds the view that this initiative, in combination with better enforcement of the Trade and Sustainable Development chapters, should help to improve social and environmental standards in third countries;
44. Understands the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing negotiations with the UK but is deeply disappointed by the complete lack of reference in the 2021 Work Programme to the future relations

between the EU and the UK, given the direct and dramatic impact of Brexit on many LRAs in the EU. Awaits, therefore, the Commission's proposal on the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) and insists that the BAR must be designed in such a way that it not only addresses economic shortfalls at Member State level, but also takes into account the territorial dimension of Brexit;

45. Welcomes the emphasis placed by the Commission on the need to protect EU companies and the single market from unfair trade and competition practices, especially through the announced legislative initiatives on levelling the playing field, on public procurement and on sustainable corporate governance. The CoR calls on the EP and the Council to move forward with the negotiations on the Enforcement Regulation, the proposal on dual use exports and the International Public Procurement Instrument relating to the WTO plurilateral Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA);
46. Reiterates the need to involve LRAs in shaping a Health Union, as they have significant responsibilities in the field of public health in most Member States. Welcomes in this context the Commission's intention to reinforce the EU's framework for detecting and responding to serious cross-border health threats, including strengthening the role of existing agencies and establishing a European agency for biomedical advanced research and development; in this respect, reiterates its call for a European Health Emergency Mechanism to coordinate EU action and to support national, regional and local healthcare providers and promote the development of disaster preparedness structures to respond effectively to health threats and crisis situations;
47. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for a European health data space but calls for a thorough impact assessment of the proposal at local and regional level to ensure the interoperability of systems while minimising the administrative and financial burden;
48. invites the Commission to engage in a dialogue with the CoR and with regions interested in the upcoming evaluation of the Directive on the application of patient rights in cross-border healthcare;
49. Reiterates the need to ensure that the future proposals under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum respect the principle of subsidiarity and are built on solidarity, especially towards the regions which are on the frontline of migratory pressure. Also maintains that it is crucial to address the root causes of migration and the fight against human trafficking, in cooperation with countries of origin and transit. Stands ready to cooperate by providing data from LRAs and by establishing permanent channels for political exchange between them and the Commission;
50. Calls for free movement in the Schengen area to be safeguarded by strengthening coordination between all Member States and regions involved in border management. EU citizens highly value their freedom of movement, especially in light of the restrictions they have recently experienced during the COVID-19 crisis and in view of the fact that it is both an integral part of European citizenship and a crucial element of building a European identity;
51. Strongly supports the cultural and creative sectors (CCS), which have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 crisis, and calls for a culture of solidarity in the recovery phase. Pleads for a solid cultural heritage dimension within the New European Bauhaus announced by President von der Leyen and included in the Renovation Wave, combining performance with inventiveness;

52. Reiterates its call to the Commission to include as a follow-up to the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 all forms of violence against women and girls in the "EU crimes" set out in Article 83 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
53. Warmly welcomes by the same token the Commission's intention to present an initiative in order to extend the list of EU crimes to include hate crime and hate speech against vulnerable groups of people;
54. Urges the European institutions to finalise the negotiations and adopt the proposed Regulation on the mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context (ECBM), which will have a long-lasting, significant and positive impact on the future of cross-border cooperation. Underlines furthermore the need for an adequate EU legal framework to allow for the efficient establishment and management of cross-border public services (CPS), additionally highlighted by the on-going crisis. Current frameworks often come attached with overwhelming administrative burdens and costs, which drive many LRAs to abandon their plans for such services, leaving European citizens living in these regions in a disadvantaged position;
55. Instructs its president to forward this Resolution to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies of the Council of the EU and the President of the European Council.

Brussels,

The President  
of the  
European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

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