Dear Secretary-General,

In conformity with the Protocol on Cooperation between the Commission and the European Committee of the Regions, I am pleased to send you the follow-up given by the Commission to the opinions adopted by the European Committee of the Regions during the plenary session of June 2019.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]
Enrico Forti
(Director)

Enclosure: Follow-up given by the Commission to the opinions adopted by the European Committee of the Regions during the plenary session of June 2019
FOLLOW-UP PROVIDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
TO THE OPINIONS OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

PLENARY SESSION OF JUNE 2019

87th REPORT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N°</th>
<th>TITLE / LEAD DG</th>
<th>REFERENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SG.E2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): a basis for a long-term EU strategy for a sustainable Europe by 2030</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Arnoldas ABRAMAVIČIUS (LT/EPP)</td>
<td>COM (2019) 22 final&lt;br&gt;COR-2019-00239-00-00-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;ECON-VI/044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Towards a comprehensive EU framework on endocrine disruptors</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Uno SILBERG (EE/EA)</td>
<td>COM (2018) 734 final&lt;br&gt;COR-2018-06068-00-00-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;NAT-VI/040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DG REGIO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Macro-regional strategies, such as the Danube: a framework for promoting transnational clusters</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Dainis TURLAIS (LV/ALDE)</td>
<td>COR-2018-06422-00-00-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;COTER-VI/051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DG TAXUD</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>Towards a more efficient and democratic decision making in EU tax policy</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Christophe ROUILLON (FR/PES)</td>
<td>COR-2019-00845-00-00-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;ECON-VI/045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DG GROW</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>A placed based approach to the EU industrial policy strategy</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Jeannette BALJEU (NL/ALDE)</td>
<td>COR-2018-05941-00-00-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;ECON-VI/042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>A new European agenda to speed up the development of maritime industries</strong>&lt;br&gt;Rapporteur: Christophe CLERGEAU (FR/PES)</td>
<td>COR-2018-06141-00-01-AC-TRA&lt;br&gt;NAT-VI/038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG RTD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection between economy, society and the environment</td>
<td>COR-2018-06433-00-00-AC-TRA SEDEC-Vl/048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur: Jácint HORVÁTH (HU/PES)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DG EAC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong> Strengthening STE(A)M education in the EU</td>
<td>COR-2018-06435-00-00-AC-TRA SEDEC-Vl/049</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur: Csaba BORBOLY (RO/EPP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG ECHO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong> Cross-border dimension in disaster risk reduction (DRR)</td>
<td>COR-2018-06135-00-00-AC-TRA NAT-Vl/036</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur: Roberto CIAMBETTI (IT/ECR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG CLIMA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong> A Clean Planet for all A European strategic long-term</td>
<td>COM (2018) 773 final COR-2018-05736-00-00-AC-TRA ENVE-Vl/037</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economy</td>
<td>Rapporteur: Michele EMILIANO (IT/PES)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG ENER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong> Multilevel governance and cross-sectoral cooperation to</td>
<td>COR-2018-05877-00-00-AC-TRA ENVE-Vl/038</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight energy poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur: Kata TÜTTŐ (HU/PES)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
N°1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): a basis for a long-term EU strategy for a sustainable Europe by 2030
COM (2019) 22 final
COR-2019-00239 – ECON-VI/044
135th Plenary Session – June 2019
Rapporteur: Arnoldas ABRAMAУИЧІУС (EPP/LT)
SG – First Vice-President TIMMERMANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</th>
<th>European Commission position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main policy recommendations</td>
<td>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s opinion on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and takes note of the recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Committee of the Regions:</td>
<td>Sustainable Development is firmly anchored in the EU Treaties and the EU made a key contribution to the development and adoption by the United Nations of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Achieving these goals is a shared responsibility and requires effective cooperation at EU, national, regional and local levels, respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Commission has been mainstreaming the SDGs in the European policy framework and Commission priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- calls on the European Commission and the European Council to acknowledge the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a priority for their political agenda, and an overarching objective of the next EU strategic plan 2019-2024 and beyond;</td>
<td>In the context of the political guidelines of President-elect von der Leyen, the Commission intends to refocus the European Semester into an instrument that integrates the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- contends that there is an urgent need for an EU overarching strategy coordinating implementation between all levels of government with time-bound targets and concrete deliverables for 2030, together with monitoring and review mechanisms;</td>
<td>Regarding the crucial role of regions and cities in the achievement of the SDGs, the Commission considers that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs the mobilisation of all stakeholders. Regional and local levels are where decision makers have to balance different dimensions of sustainability, participatory, social, economic and environmental and make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- calls for the new European Commission to take a leading role in setting up multi-level, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral governance, enabling the mainstreaming of all dimensions of the SDGs in all EU policies. Encourages the European Commission to use the Better Regulation guidelines as a tool to help design legislation taking into account all dimensions of the SDGs. Calls on all the EU institutions and Member States to align the European semester to the SDGs;</td>
<td>- points out that 65% of the 169 targets of the 17 SDGs require the firm engagement of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
regions and cities in implementing and monitoring the SDGs in order to be achieved. Many European regions and cities have been pioneers in this SDG localisation process and have demonstrated that regions and cities are essential for implementing the SDGs effectively and rapidly;

- highlights that cohesion is the main EU investment instrument for regions and cities to implement the SDGs and ensure their economic, social and territorial development. The next EU cohesion policy should have its objectives better aligned with the SDGs, to ensure better implementation and coherence of actions.

In the 2014-2020 period, cohesion policy has mobilized around €500 billion across the EU for SDG-related projects. Cohesion policy is also a model of how to consistently apply the principle of sustainable development as a binding horizontal principle.

Overall, 94% of cohesion policy investments contribute to eleven SDGs. Approximately half of these investments (roughly €200 billion) promote modern economic growth in SDG 9 (Industry, innovation, infrastructure) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). Other significant areas of investment contribute to SDG 4 (Quality of education, €34 billion), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy, €27 billion) and SDG 1 (No poverty, €22 billion).

The Commission's proposals for post-2020 cohesion policy are designed to meet the expectations of citizens in all regions regardless of their place of residence. They encompass the need for economic, social and environmental sustainability and resilience in all places. Moreover, the post-2020 cohesion policy proposals aim at fostering a sustainable and integrated development beyond the
traditional localisation of cohesion policy at regional level. They consider through the new Policy Objective 5 (Europe closer to its citizens) that different territories, including urban ones, require place-based and tailor made policy mixes and investments.

The post-2020 EU cohesion policy, as proposed by the Commission, is well equipped to manage policy trade-offs and complementarities between the SDGs at the appropriate scale, hence the integrated approaches and multi-level cooperation of cohesion policy.

Last but not least, post-2020 cohesion policy essentially incorporates the principles of the 2030 Agenda, such as the ‘partnership principle’, which is a legal requirement for the preparation of programming documents, for investment in EU structural funds and for their implementation. Cohesion policy involves regional and local authorities, which are consulted at all stages of the policy cycle, from planning to implementation.

As regards the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, the Commission proposal ensured that it continues to apply to the entire programming cycle (as in 2014-2020) and to all funds covered by the Common Provisions Regulation. This ensures the continuity of modalities in the involvement of partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22. stresses that, while the SDGs include an urban goal, SDG 11, there is no dedicated regional goal, and regional development is only referred to indirectly under the heading on land use. A close alignment of cohesion policy with the SDGs therefore implies that the programming of new EU cohesion policy funding addresses all territory-relevant SDGs and not just SDG 11;</th>
<th>The EU cohesion policy is already strongly aligned with the policy approach of the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable development is embedded in cohesion policy as a binding horizontal principle, together with its corresponding governance model and partnership approach. Being the EU’s main investment policy, the EU cohesion policy is a regionalised,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. COM (2018) 375</td>
<td>6 / 71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
transversal and crosscutting policy, which contributes to most, if not all 17 SDGs. The SDGs are mainstreamed at all levels and stages of implementation of cohesion policy.

In view of the five policy objectives proposed by the Commission for 2021-2027, cohesion policy can have a very important role in the attainment of the SDGs.

Regarding the scope of funding, the Commission’s efforts in this field will continue to a similar extent via Cohesion policy throughout the next multiannual financial framework (MFF). Furthermore, an increased contribution of cohesion policy funding will be geared to climate-related actions, in accordance with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement. The reformed post-2020 cohesion policy will also help to further localise the SDGs, since its delivery will continue to be done in close cooperation with regions and local authorities.

With the renewed framework proposed for cohesion policy by the Commission, many SDGs will be covered under the implementation of the funds in relation to the detailed ‘policy objectives’ and ‘specific objectives’ among which the authorities have to choose to establish their policy mix of measures. For example, it is possible to enhance innovation capacity (policy objective PO1 and SDG9), promote energy efficiency measure (policy objective PO2, SDG7 and 13) or reduce inequalities by reinforcing access to education and training (policy objective PO4 and SDG 4).

By focusing via horizontal objectives on economic growth and reducing inequalities among countries and regions, which all programmes of implementation have to follow, cohesion policy also relates to SDG 8
Paragraph 9 of the New Urban Agenda reaffirms the global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realising sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors. Cohesion policy is well equipped to enable the achievement of the commitment in Paragraph 9. One of the main features of post-2020 Policy Objective 5 (Europe closer to citizens) is to empower cities and urban areas to ‘fulfil their territorial functions across administrative boundaries and act as hubs and drivers for balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development at all levels’.

24. stresses the potential of the CoR proposal that the future cohesion policy post-2020 should support regions and cities to "localise the SDGs" and to align the implementation of sustainable urban development strategies to their local realities;

The Commission acknowledges that cities are key drivers for most, if not all, the SDGs implementation and not only for SDG 11.

In this perspective, the Commission considers that cities and their relationship to their neighbouring territories are part of the solution to economic, environmental and social challenges. That is fully reflected in the Commission proposals for the post-2020 cohesion policy new Policy Objective 5 (Europe closer to citizens).

With policy objective 5 and its two specific objectives, the Commission establishes its visible commitment for integrated urban and territorial development. This policy objective will do so by:

- delivering incentives for integrated territorial development strategies that target functional territories while crossing administrative boundaries, the sub-regional, urban or the local community levels;
overcoming isolated policy approaches, and institutional, sectoral, administrative and political boundaries at a lower level of proximity; integrated territorial development can help increase the effectiveness, relevance and return on investments of cohesion policy interventions;

- providing greater thematic flexibility for achieving results when it comes to supporting integrated territorial, urban and local development strategies, because the policy objective combines measures falling under all intervention fields available under the other policy objectives 1-4. Regions and cities will be able to respond to the diverse and interdependent challenges and development potentials of urban, rural, coastal and other territories, as well as local communities, with the view to foster their sustainable and resilient development through tailor-made policy mixes;

- incentivising a special governance method based on more collaborative working and decision-making, where developing and improving these governance structures might require dedicated time, effort and administrative capacity.

Finally, streamlined integrated territorial investments bring different actors together while facilitating cooperation across administrative boundaries and participatory methods such as Community-led local development (CLLD). This combination will ensure flexible programming arrangements and participatory approach.

25. highlights the importance of EU financing instruments for agriculture, research and innovation and EFSI and their synergic use together with cohesion funds to fully achieve

The legal framework of the respective instruments and funds facilitates complementary use. In particular, the partnership agreement and programme
documents need to provide information about the envisaged complementary use of the other funds and Union instruments from the perspective of cohesion policy. The programming process should also take into account the planned complementary use of funds and instruments with cohesion policy resources.

The multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 and its spending programmes are one of the EU levers contributing to the achievement of the political objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In the Programme Statements annexed to the draft budget, each spending programme explains, in a qualitative manner, its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

The principles of prosperity, sustainability, solidarity and security guides Commission’s proposal for the next multi-annual European budget for 2021-2027.

Sustainable development is at the very core of the proposals. It is a crosscutting priority, not just one heading or a single programme. Sustainability is promoted through numerous programmes and spending instruments.

The next multi-annual budget introduces a more ambitious goal for climate mainstreaming across all EU programmes, with a target of 25% of EU expenditure contributing to climate, including clean energy transition objectives. This target is raised to 35% of the overall budget of the proposed research and innovation framework programme ‘Horizon Europe’, which is conceived and designed in line with the SDGs. Furthermore, this climate action target is raised to 40% in the case of expenditure for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
Moreover, further improving the sustainable development of farming, food and rural areas is a cross-cutting objective proposed for the CAP post-2020.

| 47. requests that the governance of the Sustainable European Semester within the Commission involves all relevant Commission services and avoids "silo initiatives"; |
| The European Semester currently involves all relevant Commission services, working together and sharing information in order to provide high-quality and integrated analysis and policy advice. The Commission intends to continue working in this manner. |

| 49. calls on the EU institutions to use the EU budget to mainstream the SDGs in all policies, notably halting subsidies for fossil fuels and reinforcing sustainability criteria in public procurement; |
| The global vision behind the Sustainable Development Goals – taking action for people, the planet and prosperity – is completely in line with European Union’s priorities. The EU played an important role in shaping the global 2030 Agenda – speaking with one voice, the EU has more weight. The EU’s vision and the next multiannual financial framework are already fully consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission has recognised that a phase-out of subsidies to environmentally harmful fossil fuel is necessary to achieve an efficient and effective Energy Union, as recognised by EU commitments in the G20 framework. The Commission has recognised the importance of public procurement as a powerful tool for spending public money in an efficient, sustainable and strategic manner. In its Communication ‘Making Public Procurement work in and for Europe’ it has stressed that the use of high quality standards is crucial for central and local government to respond to societal, environmental, and economic challenges. The Commission is raising awareness on the use of social considerations in public procurement by organising workshops in the Member States. It plans to publish a |

| 2 COM/2017/0572 final. |
| comprehensive guide in 2020 and to disseminate a collection of good practices on Socially Responsible Public Procurement. The Commission also offers sets of green public procurement criteria for 19 product groups which can be directly included in the tender documents. Furthermore, the Commission has developed a Handbook on green public procurement\(^3\) and a Green Public Procurement Training Toolkit\(^4\) for public purchasers designed for training courses and workshops. The Commission is organising green public procurement training programmes for public buyers in the EU, it develops a series of sector-specific life-cycle costs calculation tools, and has created a database of good practice experiences.

| 50. calls for disaggregating data, at least at NUTS2 level, and where necessary at local level, to enable better policy-making where the national average is misleading. | The engagement of the 2030 agenda to ‘leave no-one behind’ indeed makes geographical disaggregation essential for SDG monitoring. Eurostat is engaged to produce NUTS2 level and local level data whenever data sources and the data collection methodology used allow the production of these breakdowns (e.g. sample size is crucial for geographical disaggregation of most survey data).

Eurostat is exploring new data sources based on geospatial information such as Copernicus High Resolution Layers and other sources and is confident that new indicators can be developed to provide geographically more disaggregated data for SDG monitoring. Potential areas for such geo-enabled SDG indicators are e.g. access to public transport or distribution of green urban areas; both included on Eurostat’s ‘on hold’ list for further consideration as EU |

---


\(^4\) [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/toolkit_en.htm)
SDG indicators (see Report on the 2019 review of EU SDG indicators\(^5\), annex 6).

Links to existing NUTS2 level data and data by degree of urbanisation (a local level territorial typology) are provided for an increasing number of EU SDG indicators on Eurostat’s dedicated SDG website.\(^6\) The implementation of Eurostat’s new user interface, planned by the end of 2019, will further improve this presentation.

51. Need to go beyond GDP and use additional indicators which are not purely economic in nature but capture the transformative nature of the SDGs, and which should be measured at NUTS2 level at least through disaggregated data relevant to the achievement of the SDGs;

The EU SDG indicators need to cover all dimensions of sustainable development as reflected in the 2030 Agenda. Annual reviews since implementation of the initial EU SDG indicator set have increased slightly the number of environmental oriented indicators. The EU SDG indicator set 2019 has 37% environmental oriented indicators (compared to 36% social indicators, 17% economic indicators and 9% institutional indicators).

One third of the EU SDG indicators (and most of the environmental indicators) are based on non-official statistical sources and data at NUTS2 or local level are often not available for these indicators. However, Eurostat supports initiatives to advance further development work and improve the geographical disaggregation of SDG indicators also in non-official statistical areas. For instance, data on estimated severe soil erosion by water calculated by the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (JRC) and used for SDG monitoring is expected to be published for the first time at NUTS 3 level on the Eurostat website by November 2019.\(^7\)

\(^6\) see https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/sdi/indicators
\(^7\) https://appssoeurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=aei_pr_soilera&lang=en
53. proposes that the EU Joint Research Centre set up an urban SDG data platform to make a European handbook of voluntary cities implementing the SDGs;

In the context of the Commission's Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies, the Directorate-General Joint Research Centre (JRC), in collaboration and coordination with Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO), is already engaged in a number of activities and projects that relate directly to the Committee's proposal.

In particular, in the framework of the project URBAN2030 (joint JRC-REGIO initiative), the JRC is working on a handbook for the preparation of voluntary local reviews on SDGs with specific focus on urban indicators for the SDG monitoring. The finalisation of this report is planned for February 2020 and its publication for spring 2020.

Further activities of the Joint Research Centre cover the development and maintenance of the Urban Data Platform (UDP). An interactive version of the Handbook is envisaged to be published in this platform, offering researchers, planners and decision makers' additional insight and functionality, similarly to what has been done for the JRC flagship report "The Future of Cities".⁸

54. calls on Eurostat to include work of the World Council City Data (ISO standards for indicators for smart and resilient cities) and OECD (elaborating a visualisation tool, combining official indicators with modelled ones at regional and local level to take into account regional disparities).

Eurostat follows the work of the World Council on City Data from the point of view that data of the European Statistical System needs to comply with agreed international standards and definitions (for example: employment indicators are defined in the Labour Force Survey, education qualifications are standardised by the International Standard Classification of Education classification etc.). It is crucial for EU SDG monitoring to keep city level data.

⁸ https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/thefutureofcities/
| 57. requests a partnership between the EU, national, regional and local level to help implement the SDGs through development cooperation; | comparable to regional and national level data. Eurostat collaborates closely with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on territorial indicators and follows its work on the localised indicator framework for SDGs. The visualisation tool is expected to be presented by OECD at the meeting of its Working Party on Territorial Indicators in November 2019. |
| 58. requests that the role of global supply chains be better monitored to make sure the rule of law and human rights are respected, and that circular economy practices are implemented and overuse of resources is avoided; | According to the European Consensus on Development, the principle of close partnership with regional and local authorities is at the heart of the Commission’s approach to sustainable development. Particularly through its Framework Partnership Agreements with global and regional associations of local authorities, the Commission maintains a structured dialogue with regional and local authorities and supports their capacities to implement the SDGs at the local level. |
| | The Commission is fully committed to pursuing a value-based EU trade policy that promotes sustainable development on the basis of respect for core labour rights, adequate environmental standards and action against climate change. To this effect, all modern EU free trade agreements include detailed Trade and Sustainable Development chapters. In many of the recent agreements such chapters contain specific provisions on the responsible management of supply chains, environmental goods and services, green growth and circular economy, as well as fair and ethical trade. The Commission also provides substantial financial support to projects aimed at promoting responsible business practices in the countries it is trading with. |
60. regrets that the European Commission proposal for the new Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) does not include a thematic funding line dedicated to supporting local authorities;

It is the ambition of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) to work more with local authorities, not less. Indeed, the Commission recognises the essential role local authorities have to play as actors of development. With this in mind, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument provides several spaces for cooperation:

- through the thematic programme for 'Global challenges', one of the priority sectors identified in Annex III is the strengthening of the role of local authorities as actors of development. This would enable the Commission to keep on supporting the work of platforms and foster awareness rising through;

- the geographic programme where the bulk of cooperation with local authorities would take place, and where it would be able to do so in a more efficient manner, closer to the ground;

- country programmes, further cooperation in the field of decentralisation and support to local authorities, where relevant;

- regional programmes, where the Commission would be able to issue calls for proposals, without being limited by its political dialogue with governments;

Through this multi-strand approach, local authorities would ultimately benefit and the support to local authorities would be ensured.

61. calls on the European Commission to support the economic and social integration of young people, women and uprooted populations in developing countries. The partnership logic of decentralised cooperation can help transform the perception of migration

The social and economic integration and development of individuals in the partner countries are key to sustainable development, especially that of young people, women and uprooted populations. Decentralised cooperation plays an
as a threat into migration as an opportunity, especially given the key role regions and cities play in integrating migrants into their host societies;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>important and vital role in achieving the above-mentioned social and economic integration and development. Being on the frontline and closest to citizens, local authorities are often best placed to interact with them in order to effectively address their issues and challenges. In addition, cities and regions play a fundamental role with regard to making migration work for development. The Commission is committed to working with local authorities in order to address the challenges that hosting migrants and refugees might raise and to maximise the contribution they can make to the host societies. A number of such actions have been funded by the Commission, notably in the Horn of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>63. insists that beyond the proposed increase of the climate change mainstreaming target to 25%, the new MFF should allocate relevant financial resources for sustainable development and also ensure that no funding undermines the implementation of the SDGs;</td>
<td>Reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission proposed to set a more ambitious goal for climate-related spending of 25% of the total multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, compared to 20% in the current framework. The target of 25% of climate-related expenditure is ambitious and realistic, taking into account the proposed changes in the EU budget structure and in particular the growing importance of new priority areas. Sustainability elements are taken into account into several EU programmes. For instance, a specific guidance on 'sustainability proofing' is currently under development to ensure that all the sustainability dimensions (climate, environmental, economic and social) are enshrined into the InvestEU programme. Sustainable Development is a major concern in the external policies instruments, such as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>64. underlines the urgency of adopting the strategies and defining actions towards a resource-efficient circular economy by implementing the Paris Agreement with no further delay;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission highlighted in its ‘Clean planet for all’ communication(^9) the strong synergies between promoting circular economy and achieving climate neutrality by 2050. In this respect, the report on the implementation of the circular economy action plan(^10) stressed that the transition towards a circular economy and a climate-neutral economy should be pursued together, based on a strong industrial ambition and reaping the EU businesses’ first-mover advantage in these areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>69. calls for a follow-up to the Commission’s &quot;Action Plan on Financing Sustainable Growth&quot; as finance needs to be used to leverage the change that gives returns for sustainability and not only financial returns;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission’s Action Plan on Financing Sustainable Growth of March 2018, with its 10 key actions, is currently being implemented. Substantial progress, on the legislative and technical side, has already been made to (i) establish an EU-wide classification system for environmentally sustainable economic activities (‘EU taxonomy’), (ii) disclosures on sustainability by the financial sector and (iii) climate benchmarks. Further work on an EU Green Bond Standard, the use of the EU Ecolabel for green financial products, improving climate-related reporting by corporates and promoting sustainable finance internationally (through a dedicated International Platform on Sustainable Finance) has been undertaken. The Commission will reflect on further following-up on its current Action Plan, in the context of the political guidelines and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| 71. | points out that, in order to keep with the Union's policy coherence for development (PCD), the CAP should promote the development of sustainable agriculture in developing countries, which helps maintain rural populations and ensures the security of their food supplies. To this end, EU agricultural and food products should not be exported at a price lower than European production costs; | The EU gives duty-free and quota-free access to all Less Developed Countries, and unilateral concessions to developing countries. The EU has developed Economic Partnership Agreements that were carefully crafted to allow partner countries to protect their sensitive agricultural products from liberalisation, either by excluding them entirely or by allowing robust safeguards that can be used to guard against sudden increases in imports. The Commission continues to work closely with partner countries in the developing world to share expertise and best practice on agriculture and food safety. Export refunds ceased to exist on 1 January 2014 and the EU was a key driving force behind the World Trade Organization (WTO) decision in December 2015 to scrap all trade-distorting export subsidies. |
| 75. | against the background of huge social inequalities outlined in the Reflection Paper such as more than 22% of EU citizens being at risk of poverty, reiterates its call to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and to devote the same attention to social sustainability factors as to environmental sustainability in order to prove that the EU aims at leaving no one and no territory behind; | Evidence presented in the 2019 ‘Employment and Social Developments in Europe’ annual review underlines the important synergies between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. It shows the need for policy measures to take into account diverse situations and challenges across population groups, sectors and regions. It will be for the new Commission to take action to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights. |
| 76. | requests a more regionalised monitoring of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The CoR is currently developing a regional social scoreboard, which could be used to this end; | The overarching aim of the Social Pillar is to promote upward convergence between Member States, and therefore the Social Scoreboard is used to analyse country performance at national level. The regional |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dimension of the social situation and of convergence has been given increased prominence in the European Semester. In addition, over the past months, the Commission has been carrying out work with a view to adding a regional dimension to the Social Scoreboard.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85. calls for renewed social dialogue in corporate governance to promote the SDGs and new business models to strengthen economic democracy for sustainable growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dialogue contributes to more sustainable societies and it strengthens the democratic elements in society. It is an important vehicle to develop a common understanding of new challenges and to find compromises to tackle these. The Commission supports the autonomy of social partners and recognizes the importance of their contributions to policy making. While acknowledging the diversity of national social dialogue systems and the different roles of social partners play in different Member States, the Commission encourages Member States to support social partners to contribute to the strategies to adapt the economies to changing economic as well environmental realities. Public authorities need to set the objectives of policies, while making sure that the views and opinions of social partners are heard and taken into consideration. Public authorities should also create a framework, which is conducive for social partner negotiations. Social partners and other stakeholder need to have the necessary capacity to make their contributions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential

- The European Committee of the Regions (…)
- 6. calls on the Commission not to further delay the development and adoption of the new strategy on endocrine disruptors;
- 7. demands that the new strategy be accompanied by a detailed timetable to implement appropriate criteria for endocrine disruptors in all relevant EU laws and make progress in reducing exposure to these chemicals, in particular for the most vulnerable groups; (…)
- 8. calls on the Commission to address as soon as possible existing differences across the EU laws and to harmonise the way in which endocrine disrupting chemicals are treated, namely with a presumption that no safe threshold for exposure can be set with sufficient certainty; (…)
- 41. proposes that the EU’s legal framework

### European Commission position

- The Communication ‘Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors’, adopted on 7 November 2018, confirmed the Commission’s commitment to protect EU citizens and the environment from these substances, with the goal to minimise overall exposure.
- The Commission has identified a comprehensive set of actions with different timelines to step up the EU’s efforts in the field and these are outlined in the Communication.
- Work is on-going on all the actions. By way of example, the fitness check of the relevant legislation should be finalised in 2020. On 8 November 2019, the Commission will organise the first meeting of the Annual Forum on Endocrine Disruptors and launch the web portal on these substances. Other actions, for example in the area of research, necessarily have a longer timeframe.
- The legislative measures constituting the EU legal framework regulating chemicals have been developed at different points in time and have, in certain cases, different specific objectives. This has resulted in different approaches to endocrine disruptors, depending on the sector being regulated.
- One of the actions announced in the
and safeguards related to endocrine disruptors, which have a direct effect on human health, be updated so that, for example, legislation and guidelines on cosmetics also cover the protection of pregnant women;

| Communication ‘Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors’ is a cross-cutting fitness check of the relevant legislation to assess whether it delivers on its objectives, and analyse the coherence of the different approaches to endocrine disruptors in different sectors. The fitness check will address specifically two aspects: the absence of horizontal criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in the different legal frameworks and the different regulatory consequences for substances identified as endocrine disruptors depending on the sector or policy area in which they apply. The fitness check will pay special attention to legislation regulating products that constitute an important source of exposure for vulnerable population groups, such as toys, cosmetics and food contact materials. It will build on data collected and analysed in the context of relevant evaluations. More information is available in the published roadmap. The Commission will swiftly follow-up on the conclusions of the fitness check. |

| 9. calls on the Member States and the Commission give priority to citizens’ health outcomes while also taking into account the interests of consumers and the industry and to significantly increase funding for independent, public research into endocrine disruption and into safe substitutes and other innovative solutions; (...) |

| The Commission agrees on the importance of providing continued support to research on endocrine disruptors to constitute a strong basis for effective policy-making. Since 1999, the EU has funded over 50 relevant projects for an amount of over €150 million and the Commission allocated further €50 million under its framework programme Horizon 2020, allowing the funding of eight projects on new testing methods for endocrine disruptors. In the Communication ‘Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors’, the Commission |

| 12. stresses the need for information on how and to what extent people and other living organisms are exposed to endocrine disruptors, how these substances are spread, and what impact they have on human health and flora and fauna; (...) |

---

22. stresses equally that current science does not provide a sufficient basis for setting a limit value below which adverse effects do not occur. Endocrine disrupters should therefore be regarded as "non-threshold" substances, which means that any exposure to such substances may entail a risk, especially during critical windows of development (prenatal, postnatal and puberty), and that the effects of mixtures should be taken into particular account; (...)

27. calls on the Commission to support targeted research projects, including the development of new testing and analysis methods, on substances likely to affect the endocrine system and to emphasise the adverse effects at low concentrations or through combined exposure; (...)

17. has doubts about the definition set out in 2002 under the International Programme on Chemical Safety – a joint programme of various UN Agencies, including the World Health Organization – according to which "an endocrine disruptor is an exogenous substance or mixture that alters function(s) of the endocrine system and consequently causes adverse health effects in an intact organism, or its progeny, or (sub)populations". Based on current committed to continuing ensuring the necessary support to research on endocrine disrupters in its future framework programme for research and innovation, Horizon Europe, building on the work under the current framework programme, Horizon 2020.

Particular attention should be paid to areas where knowledge gaps on endocrine disrupters still exist, including:
- testing methods to identify endocrine disruptors;
- the impact that exposure to endocrine disrupters has on the development of diseases and on wildlife;
- the existing controversy as to whether and how certain toxicological principles, such as the "safe threshold" are applicable to assess the safety of endocrine disrupters;
- combined exposure (‘mixture/cocktail effect’) and
- developing safer alternatives.

The definition of endocrine disruptors proposed in 2002 by the World Health Organization through its International Programme for Chemical Safety has reached the widest consensus by scientists. The EU has been pioneering by implementing this definition in the EU regulatory framework, after this definition was endorsed by the European Food Safety Authority, the European Chemicals Agency and the Scientific Committee for Consumer Safety.
evidence, this definition is too narrow and does not take sufficient account of the impact on flora and fauna;

18. proposes that consideration be given to the following definition of endocrine disrupters based on the current state of knowledge: "Endocrine disrupters are exogenous chemicals or mixtures of chemical substances that alter the functioning of hormones and the endocrine system, and negatively affect physiological and developmental processes, including the health of humans and animals or their offspring".

The definition has been the basis for successfully identifying endocrine disrupters with adverse effects to human health and to the environment under different pieces of EU legislation.

It should also be noted that any change to an internationally agreed definition should be based on experience with the current definition (which is still building up in the EU) and it would take significant time for reaching consensus on a new definition.

Finally, the Commission would like to note that the alternative definition proposed is not giving any ecological endpoints, and therefore does not address impacts on flora.

32. points out that "Better Regulation" principles should not delay any measure aimed at averting or reducing potentially serious or irreversible consequences for human health and/or the environment, as compelled by the precautionary principle enshrined in the EU Treaties;

'Better regulation' initiatives are never meant to delay action but to design EU policies and laws that achieve their objectives in the most effective and efficient manner. It is a way of working to ensure that political decisions are prepared in an open, transparent manner, informed by the best available evidence and backed by the comprehensive involvement of stakeholders.

The Commission would like to note that, in the past twenty years, the EU has made significant progress in understanding and regulating endocrine disrupters. Today, the EU legislation is recognised among the most protective ones in the world and the EU has banned or restricted the use of many endocrine disrupters under different legal frameworks.

37. urges the Commission and the Member States to provide Europeans with reliable information – presented in an appropriate form and in a language that they can understand – about the dangers of endocrine disrupters, their effects, and possible ways of reducing exposure;

Public health protection remains primarily a competence of Member States and different sensitivities on endocrine disruptors exist among Member States. In line with subsidiarity considerations, the Commission believes that EU efforts should focus on areas where there is a real EU-added value. In the area of consumer information/education, this
| 38. calls for a ban on bisphenols and phthalates in all food contact materials;  
39. points out that Bisphenol A (BPA) is often replaced with Bisphenol S (BPS), Bisphenol F (BPF) and Bisphenol HPF (BHPF), which are less studied but appear to have similar hormone-disrupting effects; is therefore of the opinion that co-legislators should regulate groups of related chemicals, rather than taking a substance by substance approach. In the absence of good data to the contrary, chemicals with a similar structure should be assumed to have toxicological properties as harmful as those of the most toxic known substance in the group; | is primarily the provision of full information on EU actions on endocrine disruptors. This is why the Commission will launch a one-stop shop web portal on endocrine disruptors in November 2019. The Commission encourages Member States, which deem it necessary, to develop specific information and educational campaigns on endocrine disruptors for the general public and vulnerable groups. The Commission will also encourage exchange of best practices, for example in the context of the Annual Forum on Endocrine Disruptors.  

In 2018, the Commission introduced a measure to set further restrictions for Bisphenol A (BPA) in food contact materials, including those in contact with foodstuffs specifically intended for infants and young children. The European Food Safety Authority is currently re-evaluating BPA, including concerns on its endocrine disrupting properties. The authorisation and use of other bisphenols in food contact materials is also limited, including Bisphenol S (BPS) and 4,4’-dihydroxybiphenyl, which are authorised for use as monomers only in plastic food contact materials with specific migration limits. The European Food Safety Authority is currently working together with the European Chemicals Agency on an evaluation of new scientific information concerning BPS. The Commission is ready to act again on these substances if necessary, based on any new evidence resulting from the on-going evaluations. As regards phthalates, restrictions are already in place under food contact materials legislation as well as under the legislation on chemicals (REACH). The Commission has requested an updated risk assessment from the |
European Food Safety Authority for those phthalates authorised in plastic food contact materials and will take appropriate risk management action if necessary.

The REACH Review, published by the Commission in 2018, recognises the importance of grouping approaches for the assessment of groups of substances with similar properties, in order to increase the efficiencies of evaluation procedures under REACH. The European Chemicals Agency was tasked to implement grouping approaches, where this is possible.

The Commission, the European Chemicals Agency and Member States are currently working on approaches to group bisphenols and on a regulatory strategy to address these substances.

\[\text{COM(2018)116 final.}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Macro-regional strategies, such as the Danube: a framework for promoting transnational clusters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</th>
<th>European Commission position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The follow-up given by the Commission to this opinion will be included in a subsequent report.
**Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) points out that it has already encouraged the Commission to use the passerelle clause to apply qualified majority voting, particularly in tax matters. It notes (3, 4, 8, 9, 10) that the current unanimity rule on tax matters raises issues of fair taxation and democratic legitimacy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission thanks the Committee for its support for the use of qualified majority voting in some tax areas. The transition to qualified majority voting with the involvement of the European Parliament in tax matters is a priority. That is why in 2019 the Commission launched the debate with Member States before the end of the legislature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. The Committee also notes that initiatives other than those relating to tax avoidance, including proposals on the financial transactions tax submitted in 2011 and on the taxation of digital services, which the CoR had supported, were blocked by the Council.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission regrets that these initiatives were blocked in the Council. Avoiding such situations is one of the principal reasons for which the Commission suggests the use of qualified majority voting in certain taxation areas. It will be for the next Commission to decide on how to take these initiatives forward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. The CoR notes that tax avoidance by multinational companies remains an issue in the EU and believes that individual investigations should be stepped up as wrongdoing of one entity does not define the behaviour of the collective;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission pursued a number of individual investigations concerning State aids granted in the form of tax advantages to multinationals operating in the EU.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14. The Committee feels that unanimity in tax matters has also hindered the implementation of other European achievements, like the digital single market and the 2030 climate and energy framework including the review of the Energy Taxation Directive aimed at incorporating CO₂ emissions into fuel tax rates, the circular...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission fully agrees that unanimity has hampered progress on important tax initiatives needed to strengthen the Single Market and boost EU competitiveness. Moreover, as pointed out in the Commission Communication for a more efficient and democratic decision making in EU energy...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
economy and the reform of the system of own resources.

and climate policy [COM(2019)177], taxation policy is an important instrument to ensure achievement of the Energy Union objectives, and in particular to facilitate the clean energy transition.

It will be for the next Commission to consider how to drive forward initiatives in this regard. The possibility of activating the passerelle clause laid down in Article 192(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU regarding environmental measures of a fiscal nature will be examined in this context.

18. The CoR believes that abolishing the unanimity requirement in tax matters would enable the EU to move beyond defending the position of the lowest European common denominator, and so to be more ambitious with regard to the international debate on taxation, particularly as regards the OECD's work on digital taxation and profit shifting measures (BEPS).

With regard to the ongoing international debate on taxation, the EU favours a global solution that would avoid the multiplication of unilateral measures and the risks of fragmentation of the single market, double taxation and disputes. This does not exclude reflections at EU level. The Communication makes it clear that EU tax policy should not be reliant on external partners' agendas in order to effectively address shortcomings and make progress towards common objectives. The pace of EU tax policy should match the ambition of the goals it is supporting.

The Commission fully agrees that abolishing the unanimity requirement and introducing decision-making by qualified majority voting of Member States would foster the Union's credibility and ability to act.

19. The CoR supports the principle of the step-by-step approach proposed by the Commission and feels that this approach should be backed up under the European Semester and allow aggressive tax-planning schemes in particular to be tackled.

20. It would like qualified majority voting to be introduced for initiatives which do not have a direct impact on Member States' taxation rights, bases or rates, but which are necessary for

The Commission fully agrees that a step-by-step approach is necessary. In the context of the European Semester for 2019, for the first time some Member States received a recommendation to abolish their aggressive tax planning regimes.

The Commission agrees that simpler rules help EU firms comply with tax obligations. It will be for the next Commission to decide how and when to put forward proposals to
improving administrative cooperation and mutual assistance between Member States in the fight against fraud and tax avoidance. The CoR also feels that the first stage should also cover initiatives intended to help EU firms comply with tax obligations.

| improving administrative cooperation and mutual assistance between Member States in the fight against fraud and tax avoidance. The CoR also feels that the first stage should also cover initiatives intended to help EU firms comply with tax obligations. | improve the business taxation environment in the single market. |

21. The Committee wonders why the Commission is only proposing to use the specific passerelle clause set out in TFEU Article 192(2) on the environment in the second stage...it therefore suggests that the Commission propose using the passerelle clause for environmental taxation from the initial stage. It is particularly urgent to introduce a coordinated European approach to taxation in the aviation sector, which does not currently come under any European tax regime, for example with the introduction of VAT on air tickets or a kerosene tax.

| 21. The Committee wonders why the Commission is only proposing to use the specific passerelle clause set out in TFEU Article 192(2) on the environment in the second stage...it therefore suggests that the Commission propose using the passerelle clause for environmental taxation from the initial stage. It is particularly urgent to introduce a coordinated European approach to taxation in the aviation sector, which does not currently come under any European tax regime, for example with the introduction of VAT on air tickets or a kerosene tax. | The Commission has suggested a progressive four-step approach with clear milestones. The four steps are meant to ensure a gradual move to qualified majority voting, starting with rather consensual areas and moving step by step to areas that some Member States may consider to be sensitive. The timing proposed for proceeding to the first and the second step is identical, that is 'swiftly'. Besides, the roadmap proposed by the Commission does not preclude using the passerelle clause for environmental taxation before taking any action for initiatives falling under the first step. In this perspective, the Energy Tax Directive will be reviewed. The possibility to activate the passerelle clause laid down in Article 192(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU regarding environmental measures of a fiscal nature will be examined in the context of this review. |

30/71
Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential | European Commission position
---|---
6. stresses that there is a need for investment in innovative new technologies and digitalisation, in a carbon neutral and circular economy and in related skills across European regions to enhance Europe’s competitive advantage; | Investment in innovative technologies and digitalisation and in a carbon-neutral and circular economy will be main priorities in the EU funding programmes in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework, including InvestEU, Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, the Connecting Europe Facility, the Single Market Programme and the European Regional Development Funds, including the Interregional Innovation Investment Instrument.

11. notes that European industry should be supported through both economic and non-economic action and measures, in the latter case for example through policies on education and training or supporting research and innovation; | The EU recently reformed its anti-dumping and anti-subsidy legislation to react more effectively to unfair trade practices that harm EU producers. In December 2017 a new dumping calculation methodology was introduced for countries where significant market distortions exist as a result of State intervention. In June 2018 a comprehensive modernisation of trade defence instruments was adopted which resulted in investigations being faster and more transparent, with the possibility to impose higher duties in cases where there are serious raw materials distortions as well as in subsidy cases.

The recently adopted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Screening Regulation<sup>14</sup> puts in place for the first time a mechanism to coordinate the screening of foreign investments likely to affect

---

the security and public order of the Union and its Member States. This mechanism is based on an obligation to exchange information between Member States and the Commission, as well as on the possibility for the Commission to issue opinions on specific transactions.

26. observes that information on regional activities in innovation, existing capacities (infrastructures, expertise) and circular economy potential is crucial. This existing data is often scattered and fragmented which limits their usefulness for regions; therefore encourages the European Commission to undertake a true evidence collection exercise taking into consideration the local and regional perspective on the EU strategy for industry;

27. recommends that the Commission enhance support for inter-regional and cross border collaboration, also within existing initiatives such as the Vanguard Initiative or Thematic Smart Specialisation partnerships that involve an increasing number of regions, in the context of a renewed place-based approach as proposed by the European Commission Cohesion policy proposals post 2020;

28. in the context of the post-2020 programming period, calls for strengthened EU support for regional eco-systems and clusters in the framework of Interregional Innovation Investments, building on the Smart Specialisation approach and enlarging existing initiatives such as the Smart Specialisation Platform on industrial modernisation and the pilot initiative on regions in industrial transition;

As an important step in evidence collection, the Commission is preparing a comprehensive mapping of support actors and state-of-the-art facilities in regional ecosystems to foster cross-regional partnerships and access to competences.

The Commission has been working with regions for a number of years to facilitate interregional investments in innovation. The Commission will seek to reinforce interregional cooperation for innovation as already outlined in the Commission Communication ‘Strengthening Innovation in Europe’s regions’.

The Commission has proposed a dedicated instrument in the next multi-annual financial framework. The so-called ‘Component 5’ of Art.3 of the European territorial cooperation (ETC) Regulation aims at helping those involved in smart specialisation strategies to cluster together, scale up and bring innovation to the European market.

The EU support would be organised in two strands:

- Strand 1 - support for investments in interregional innovation projects targeting

\[Regulation\ (EU) \ No\ 1299/2013\ of\ the\ European\ Parliament\ and\ of\ the\ Council\ of\ 17\ December\ 2013\ on\ specific\ provisions\ for\ the\ support\ from\ the\ European\ Regional\ Development\ Fund\ to\ the\ European\ territorial\ cooperation\ goal;\ OJ\ L\ 347,\ 20.12.2013,\ p.\ 259–280.\]
also considers it important to develop instruments for implementing collaborative inter-regional industrial investment projects in close collaboration with regions and Smart Specialisation partnerships;

| 30. calls on the Commission to further develop brokerage tools to identify and actively boost collaboration for Smart Specialisation Strategies to facilitate a continuous process in which regions identify the priority areas where collaboration is crucial in order to maintain European leadership; |

| 31. recommends that the Commission encourage industrial innovation based on Smart Specialisation Strategies across all regions by facilitating specific support schemes in which well-developed regions can work together on concrete projects with less developed regions to their mutual advantage, as well as on collaborative projects between developed regions and relevant projects between less developed regions for mutual benefit; |

| 37. calls on the Commission to promote pilots in clusters of regions which allow for experimentation, following the IPCEI -like approach but at a smaller scale in order to promote interregional cooperation; |

| 34. stresses that regions have an important role in connecting, developing and supporting the regional innovation ecosystem, organising the mapping of available capacities, and involving different stakeholder groups in a true demand-driven and collaborative approach to setting industrial goals, therefore calls for regional representation in the governance of the mission orientated approach, including in the already connected regions active in the smart specialisation platforms; |

- Strand 2 - support for the development of value chains in less developed regions. The focus should be on reinforcing the regional innovation ecosystems, unlocking under utilised capacities which could reinforce EU value chains.

Several regional and innovation stakeholders have already expressed their strong support for ‘Component 5’ through a joint statement (of the European Association of Research and Technology Organisations (EARTO), European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN), the Vanguard Initiative, Eurotech Universities, Assembly of European Regions, European Network of Living Labs and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)), in addition to the individual partnerships registered on the thematic smart specialisation platforms.

| Mission Boards will be comprised of members, who bring a diversity of skills and areas of expertise, including regional issues, but none of these members will formally represent any particular area of interest in the governance for the missions. |
35. recommends that the Commission set clear mid- and long-term goals in the mission-oriented policies and translate these into policies that are made operational in the Structural and Investment funds, Horizon Europe and Digital Europe;

This approach is reflected in the criteria for missions, which are described in the draft Regulation for Horizon Europe. Such missions will aim to catalyse other forms of funding, including finance and private investment, through public Research and Innovation (R&I) investment, with the ultimate goal to deliver a public good for the benefit of society, well beyond mere research and innovation outputs.

36. recommends that local and regional authorities actively seek to lead some of these missions and to ensure that an inter-regional approach is created. This needs to be aligned with and facilitated by the available European instruments; therefore calls on the European Commission to ensure active involvement of regional stakeholders in the missions' governance in the new Horizon Europe;

The Mission Board members will be expected to consult broadly and deeply with regional and local stakeholders. This includes the possibility for an inter-regional approach.

46. recommends that the European Commission strengthen cross-regional educational programmes such as ERASMUS+ with an emphasis on vocational training and enabling talent to move across Europe;

The Erasmus programme responds to the calls made in the 2010 Bruges Communiqué regarding the support of vocational excellence for smart and sustainable growth as well as the 2017 Communication on Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions (COM(2017) 376 final), linking vocational education and training to innovation systems, as part of smart specialisation strategies at regional level.

The Commission has proposed to substantially increase the budget of the future Erasmus programme in keeping with its high ambition in this respect. The future programme will increase learning mobility opportunities for apprentices and vocational education and training learners For example, the Euroapprentice network created by Erasmus+ National Agencies promote the programme in their local and regional settings.

The Commission has also proposed to set up
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centres of Vocational Excellence, which will combine a sectoral focus on skills with a local/regional dimension and cover a full range of activities to develop excellence in vocational education and training.</th>
<th>The Commission’s renewed industrial policy strategy, published in 2017, recommends a more integrated approach across value chains and policies in order to ensure the necessary coherence between different EU instruments and actions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59. calls for a holistic, coordinated multi-level governance approach in order to ensure the necessary coherence between different policy instruments and action at different levels. The transition to low carbon and circular economy should take into account the whole value chain and manufacturing industry at large as well as small and medium-sized companies and start-ups;</td>
<td>Hydrogen technologies and systems have been selected by the Strategic Forum for Important Projects of Common European Interest as one of the key strategic value chains for which it is developing a joint vision for common or coordinated action. If this new feedstock is clean and affordable, it can help the transition towards climate-neutrality by 2050 of several important sectors such as energy intensive industries, transport and buildings. Synthetic fuels could be also an option for decarbonising the aviation sector. Horizon Europe foresees several actions to promote their development. The Strategic Forum has also selected other sustainable technologies such as low CO₂ emission industry and clean, connected and autonomous vehicles as key strategic value chains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. calls on the Commission to further support the development of joint strategies in specific fields, such as hydrogen and synthetic fuels, and to support the market adoption of more sustainable technologies;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. recommends that regional governments should be involved in the selection and the operationalisation of European Digital Innovation Hubs in the upcoming Digital Europe Programme;</td>
<td>The Commission intends to ask Member States to propose a list of Digital Innovation Hubs and recommends Member States to engage with their regions to establish this list. The EU will select Digital Innovation Hubs based on a restricted call for proposals taking into account quality and balancing regional, technological and application coverage by the network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The CoR:

11. calls for the establishment of a new, thoroughly revised "LeaderSHIP 2030" approach setting out a "European Blue New Deal" incorporating three elements: a trade and competition policy aimed at safeguarding our interests and building European champions; mobilisation and adaptation of all European policies to meet the needs and characteristics of the maritime industries; and the adoption of six operational objectives around which to rally local, national and European players during the 2020-2027 period:

- decarbonising maritime transport and building clean ships – zero emissions, zero discharge at sea, zero noise;
- eliminating ocean debris, in particular plastics;
- maritime industries 4.0, a cross-cutting approach to improving the performance and quality of jobs in all maritime industries;
- positioning Europe as a global leader in all marine renewable energy technologies;
- a European strategy for a new blue bioeconomy, boosting fisheries, aquaculture and exploitation of marine

The Commission welcomes the Committee support to the sustainable development of maritime industries. This objective has been at the core of the Commission’s policy since the adoption in 2012 of the 'Blue Growth Strategy'. This strategy has focused on some key sectors with the greater potential, such as aquaculture, blue biotechnology, ocean energy or tourism. In addition, the Commission has taken action the identified ‘key enablers’ for the blue economy, notably the Maritime Spatial Planning. Member States, under Directive 2014/89, are expected to adopt maritime spatial plans by March 2021. These plans should take into consideration the increased deployment of the maritime industries offshore (notably wind energy and aquaculture). The Commission is supporting the process of the preparation of these plans.

A report on the implementation of this strategy was adopted by the Commission as a Staff Working Document on 31 March 2017.
bioresources;
launching a European ocean exploration mission to improve our knowledge of marine environments all around the world;
These six objectives entail specific challenges for industry and must also be taken into account in the open debate on a maritime mission under Horizon Europe;

19. also reiterates its request for a maritime roadmap under Horizon Europe, for the scientific and technological challenges facing maritime industries to be explicitly included in Pillar 2, and for 10% of Horizon Europe’s budget to be set aside for funding projects with a significant impact on the blue economy and maritime industries;

While the EU institutions have reached a partial political agreement, subject to formal approval by the European Parliament and Council, on Horizon Europe in March 2019, Horizon Europe’s budgetary aspects are subject to the overall agreement on the EU’s next long-term budget, proposed by the Commission in May 2018.

21. considers, with regard to globalised world markets, that competition policy needs to enable the development of European champions, while always ensuring that there is fair and balanced competition within the EU, and reaffirms the added value of the guidelines on State aid to maritime transport and the need for a simple, stable and competitive tax framework to achieve this goal;

EU competition policy and, in particular, EU merger control already allows European companies ample scope to grow and develop, fostering the emergence and growth of large European companies, leaders in their sectors. At the same time, EU competition enforcement protects effective competition and preserves choice, quality, innovation and competitive prices for European customers at all levels of the value chain.

22. draws the Commission’s attention to the importance of improving controls on foreign investment flows and of limiting and reducing the potentially harmful effects that technology transfers can have on European industry, especially those included in major international contracts;

The new EU framework for the screening of foreign direct investments has officially entered into force on 10 April 2019 and will become fully applicable from 11 October 2020. The new framework will be instrumental in safeguarding Europe’s security and public order in relation to foreign direct investments into the Union.

Over the next 18 months, the Commission and EU Member States will take the necessary steps to make sure that the EU can fully apply the Investment Screening Regulation as of 11 October 2020. These steps concern, in
particular, the setting up of the new EU-wide mechanism for cooperation, enabling Member States and the Commission to exchange information and raise concerns related to specific foreign investments. Upcoming tasks include:

- creating formal contact points in each Member State and in the Commission to allow for the exchange of information and analysis;
- establishing secure channels between Member States and the Commission to exchange information on Foreign direct investment (FDI) transactions;
- putting in place the necessary procedures for Member States and the Commission to react quickly to FDI concerns and to issue opinions;
- pursuing policy cooperation on FDI screening with relevant partner countries.

23. calls for precise commitments to be made in the management of civilian and military public procurement, with, for example, firm requirements for the supply of certain products and services identified in advance as strategic or particularly vulnerable to global competition;

A Treaty-based derogation – Article 346(1)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – for military products, in the context of the Treaty freedoms applies. This provision can only apply to measures relating to products intended for specifically military purposes. Member States may take measures as they consider necessary for the application of the essential interests of their security – the burden of proof thus lies with the Member State. However, the application of the Article is not automatic, and a Member State has to invoke it, as it is an exception to other Treaty articles, and must therefore also demonstrate that the measures at stake are necessary and proportionate. As regards dual-use products, they are generally not exempted under the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24. calls for the swift completion of the Blue Economy Investment Platform project, which must include both an assistance facility and a specific investment fund for innovative, high-risk projects. The platform should focus primarily on making financing available at preferential rates for projects deemed to be too high risk by traditional actors, and will therefore correct a gap in the market. This instrument will have to operate in close cooperation with the Member States and regions, in order to ensure complementarity between policy instruments and continuity in project support. This platform will need to draw on the networks and &quot;central ecosystems&quot; in the European Sea Tech scheme;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The BlueInvest platform(^\text{19}) began operation in September 2019. Its main priority is the support through advice and grant of small and medium sized enterprises that can contribute to EU goals such as those on decarbonisation, the circular economy or ecosystem protection. It will be accompanied by a fund that is backed by guarantees from the European Fund for Structural Investment. Regional authorities have been consulted during the preparation of the platform. Engagement continues since the start of the operations. The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) 2.0 Regulation(^\text{20}), which entered into force on 30 December 2017, extended the Fund's lifetime to the end of 2020 and its investment target from €315 billion to at least €500 billion. EFSI 2.0 puts a greater focus on sustainable projects in sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. suggests that, in a post-Brexit context, stakeholders in the maritime industries should be granted some of the specific funding allocated to supporting the most heavily affected areas, in order to create new prospects for development and employment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently, there is no proposal to establish a specific fund for maritime industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. recognises the importance of stimulating sectoral social dialogue and of organising the relationship between employment and training in the maritime industries; calls for specific platforms to fulfil these tasks not only in marine transport and bioresources but also in the manufacturing industry and shipbuilding. Attention is drawn in particular to the need to promote tailored training for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills is a new framework for strategic cooperation to address short and medium-term skills needs in a given economic sector. The first wave of the Blueprint, launched in 2018, focuses on six sectors, one of which is the Maritime Technology sector. The second wave of the Blueprint, launched in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


maritime and fishing industries so as to support generational renewal in fishing, aquaculture and shellfishing, as well as to the need to promote tailored university-level courses relating to merchant shipping. Similarly, there is a need to set up a system to ensure that training programmes are efficient and trainers sufficiently qualified;

| 2019, covers Maritime shipping. The Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) will monitor the projects in order to ensure that the Blueprints deliver on their objective — to bring together key stakeholders such as businesses, trade unions, research and training institutions and public authorities in view of developing sectoral skills strategies and concrete actions, such as new or updated vocational education and training. These will help foster new opportunities for investment, innovation, growth and jobs. |
The Committee of the Regions welcomes the 2018 Communication on the update of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, which can importantly contribute to the dialogue with the Commission. The opinion emphasises the great potential of the development of the bioeconomy in terms of growth and jobs, which will be only possible with close cooperation of regional and local stakeholders. More specifically, it highlights the need:

- For all EU Member States to draw up a national bioeconomy strategy by 2021 and to adopt bioeconomy action plans in European regions by late 2024 or include a dedicated chapter on bioeconomy in their global development strategy.
- For cities to become major circular bioeconomy hubs.
- To use ecological boundaries and ecosystems, rather than administrative boundaries, as a basis for assessing biomass production potential.
- To develop a uniform European system of indicators to oversee biomass production and provide information on activity in the regions by means of basic and specific indicators.
- To enhance complementarities of a number of European financial
instruments and devise suitable tools for coordinating resources in order to empower Member States and regions to make full use of funds available to cover support for the bioeconomy.

- For additional efforts to meet the specific labour needs of bioeconomy sectors by means of progressive and consistent education modules from primary education on, as well as training and lifelong learning modules, elaborated by Member States on the basis of open method of coordination.

Regarding the Strengthening and scaling-up the bio-based sectors, unlocking investments and markets the Committee of the Regions' opinion states:

18. stresses that applicable rules should avoid imposing an excessive administrative burden on users of bioresources. At present, such sustainability- and economy-related reporting requirements (including for business partners) come both from state aid rules and from the Renewable Energy Directive (RED II). It is also important to avoid micromanaging the use of different bioenergy resources, provided those resources meet the requirements of reducing climate impact and improving sustainability. Particularly in biorefineries, different resource streams are used for a variety of different purposes, including biofuels;

20. believes that, in order to speed up the energy transition and to make renewable energy more competitive on the market compared to fossil fuels without this being deemed unauthorised state aid, adjusting the Energy Taxation Directive and the state aid rules should be considered;

With regard to points 18 and 20 of the Committee’s opinion:

The Commission has implemented a major reform of EU state aid rules in 2014, following the State Aid Modernisation exercise. One of the goals of the state aid modernisation was to streamline state aid rules. Earlier this year, the Commission launched, in line with the Commission’s Better Regulation guidelines, the evaluation of the 2014 state aid rules. This evaluation takes the form of a ‘fitness check’. It aims to provide a basis for decisions, to be taken by the Commission in the future, about whether to prolong or possibly update the rules. In general, EU state aid rules help the Member States to stimulate ‘green’ investments in a targeted manner without crowding out private investments, while limiting any potential impact on competition and trade.

The Commission invites the Committee to provide adequate contribution, especially in relation to the regional and local dimension, to the ongoing fitness check, notably during the consultation process.
N°8  Strengthening STE(A)M education in the EU  
CoR – 2018-06435-00-00-AC-TRA – SEDEC-VI/049  
135th Plenary Session – June 2019  
Rapporteur: Csaba BORBOLY (RO/EPP)  
DG EAC – Commissioner NAVRACSICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of the European Committee of the Regions' opinion considered essential</th>
<th>European Commission's position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The CoR welcomes the recognition by a large proportion of European local and regional authorities of the fact that significant opportunities and responsibilities lie before them when it comes to defining a coherent and integrated approach to STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and the development of skills and abilities relating to these subjects, which are increasingly found all over the world and at every level of education.</td>
<td>The Commission agrees with this assessment, i.e. the importance of and the challenges facing STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and training and its regional dimension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CoR points out that while the growth of innovation-intensive economic sectors such as ICT, robotics, automation, technical research and development, logistics and various engineering activities is expected to continue in a sustained way, it could be hampered by inappropriate implementation of STEM education.</td>
<td>The Commission agrees with this assessment for the expected STEM-related growth, which may be hampered by inadequate STEM education and training. The Commission also acknowledges the importance of STEM education and training for the sectors listed, as well as for the development of artificial intelligence, bioeconomy and energy and climate studies, and is therefore promoting STEM education and training through our policies and the Erasmus+ programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CoR considers that while, in the case of STEM, there are certainly decades-old, tried and tested teaching methods, the material conditions for which are in place, there is nevertheless a need for further action given the importance of having more teachers able to cross the traditional boundaries between disciplines and foster an interdisciplinary educational approach based on applied research and scientific method and on</td>
<td>The Commission agrees with the assessment that there is a need to move towards a more multidisciplinary, project-based approach to teaching and learning of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. This is already contained in several Commission documents (e.g. the 2017 Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education and the 2017 Commission Communication on School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 / 71
projects, and in light of the fact that in many cases, the need to invest in this field has not so far been reflected in the national educational policies of the Member States; that STEM education does not mean simply passing on the various scientific subjects or disciplines separately. One of the basic principles is that their teaching must be planned and delivered not in isolation, but as part of a coherent cross-subject approach under a system which in practice is multi-disciplinary. The CoR warns that, according to the World Economic Forum, the dichotomy between humanities and sciences does not prepare new generations for the new cross-functional roles for which employees will need technical, as well as social and analytical skills. Thus, calls for a strong STEAM focus, that equips pupils and students with complex problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, people management and cognitive flexibility.

The CoR notes that, according to various studies, in the medium to long term the number of jobs in sectors related to STEM will rise significantly, and in almost all Member States unemployment rates are lowest in these sectors.

The CoR attaches importance to the fact that, given the results in STEM subjects at international level, it is worth focusing not only on higher education but also on laying the foundations for these subjects at all levels from primary education onwards. This can be achieved by broadening the range of basic skills that should be available to everyone to include basic STEM skills, and particularly technical and scientific literacy.

calls on the European Commission to propose an integrated STEM competence framework with a view to improving comparability and attainment standards in the EU.

development and excellent teaching).

An example of an action is the recently completed Call for proposals of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) 36/2018, Key Action 3: Support for policy reform - Initiatives for policy innovation; European Forward-Looking Cooperation Projects in the fields of Education and Training. Under priority 4 of this Call (Promoting innovative and cross-disciplinary approaches to STE(A)M (science, technology, engineering, (arts) and mathematics) teaching in education), several projects have been approved.

The Commission agrees with this assessment.

The Commission agrees with this assessment.

The Commission agrees with this assessment. Therefore, the Commission has undertaken the necessary steps to improve the level of basic skills across the EU. For example:

- the introduction of a benchmark under the strategic framework ‘EU Cooperation in Education and Training’ (ET2020) for underachievers, as assessed by Organisation’s for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) PISA survey;

- the work of several ‘EU Cooperation in Education and Training’ (ET2020) working groups including STEM education;
- support of numerous STEM education and training projects through Erasmus+ and Horizon2020;
- the update of the Key Competences Framework for Lifelong Learning;
- the development of more detailed and practical guidance tools for the different competences (including the possible development of a specific STEM competence framework), etc.

The Commission agrees with the importance of STEM education and training at all levels, including for continuous learning of adults.

The CoR considers that, in keeping with the principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, thought should be given to how the local and regional level can help, on the basis of the open method of coordination, to fill existing gaps and mismatches between STEM-related training systems, workforces and jobs by means of coordination, so creating a European level playing field.

The CoR calls for a full awareness of the role that local and regional authorities who finance or in some other way support education networks unquestionably have in this process, since they play a key role in mobilising EU funds.

The CoR considers that STEM-related initiatives, strategies, action plans and public-private partnerships implemented at local and regional level can play an important role in bridging the gap in development between the various regions...can go a long way towards limiting the harmful effects of the brain drain by offering career opportunities that are suitable for the active STEM workforce...that professional bodies and organisations that are active and well established at local and regional level should also be involved in planning and carrying out training courses.

The Commission agrees on the importance of the local and regional levels. We can find examples of such levels involvement in the work of the STEM Coalition and the STEM Alliance, as well as in numerous Erasmus+ and Horizon2020 projects. Providing due priority to supporting STEM-related initiatives at local and regional level is indeed one of the priorities in the Commission’s work.

To this end, the Commission already supports the STEM Coalition, which will further its mandate in 2019-2022 to cover STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) education and share best practice for the establishment of national STEM strategies across Member States. The Coalition gathers the most important actors in different regions on the field of STEM education, including businesses, local governments and higher education institutions.

The Commission agrees with the Committee’s position and points out that the Erasmus+ programme finances forward-looking cooperation projects to achieve these objectives.
The CoR urges the European Commission and the Member States to give due priority to supporting STEM-related initiatives at local and regional level (in view of the programming of the cohesion policy funds for 2021-2027, and in line with the European Semester Country Reports issuing guidance to this effect).

The CoR emphasises that if STEM courses are organised at local and regional level, specific local knowledge can be incorporated into the available training, which in turn will also increase opportunities and skills for local and regional authorities in this regard.

The CoR points out that STEM subjects could also benefit from specific local and regional solutions and traditions through the incorporation of elements related to the arts, creativity and design.

The CoR considers that it is now time for the European Commission, alongside the ambitious European Education Area plans, to ensure that all the STEM-related priorities are addressed in its direct management of relevant EU programmes; further recommends that the Commission fosters the showcasing and exchange of best practices in the STEM field also through a dedicated EU portal.

The Commission agrees with this recommendation. The existing ‘EU Cooperation in Education and Training’ (ET2020) process, the Scientix network, the School Education Gateway and the eTwinning initiative provide the platform for showcasing and exchanging best practices in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) field, and also serve as dedicated EU portals.

The Commission is already showcasing and facilitating exchange of best practices through the Erasmus+ programme and the ET2020 framework. It organises peer learning activities and finances forward looking cooperation projects in the field of STEAM education. We will encourage the projects to share results and set up a common portal for dissemination purposes.

The CoR recommends that coordinated efforts should be taken by the European Commission and by the Member States to

The Commission agrees with the assessment that women are underrepresented in many Member States in some STEM (science, technology,
ensuring
- a non-gender biased approach in STEM education, counselling and curriculum development,
- the Women in Digital (WID) scoreboard, which is the European Commission's annual scoreboard to monitor women's participation in the digital economy, be extended to assess also women's acquisition of STEM skills and inclusion in STEM jobs,
- that the language rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities are safeguarded in innovative educational efforts too, so their educational materials and curricula must not lag behind,
- direct and effective action and exchange of good practices in reaching out to youth in the education system and NEETs both to attract them to STEM courses and jobs.

The CoR is concerned at the fact that three major shortcomings have been observed in relation to STEM in recent decades:
i. there is a Europe-wide shortage of teachers specialised in STEM at all levels of education;
ii. in many cases, students' interest in STEM is decreasing;
iii. the results produced by the education system are not always in line with the needs of the labour market;

The CoR believes however that these issues should not be seen as a problem but as a practical challenge to be met, and that an effective response hinges on appropriate planning, setting up local and regional partnerships and cooperation with employers; furthermore, the fact that only nine Member States with the involvement of policy makers, engineering and mathematics) professional fields (notably Information and Communication Technology (ICT)) but points out that, at the same time, women are overrepresented in other STEM fields (e.g. bio-medicine). The Commission also agrees that the language rights of ethnic and linguistic minorities should be safeguarded and that underprivileged youth needs special attention so that they are attracted to STEM courses and jobs. All these aspects of the STEM education and training work are incorporated in the Commission priorities.

The Commission agrees with this assessment, which is also in line with the recent Commission documents (e.g. the 2017 Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education and the 2017 Commission Communication on School development and excellent teaching).

The Commission is aware of this challenge. Therefore, it has been supporting the work of the STEM Coalition, which promotes the development of national STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) platforms and strategies across all Member States with the involvement of policy makers,
States currently have a national STEM strategy underlines how urgent it is for this question to be addressed by all Member States and optimally through local and regional strategies.

The CoR notes that currently, across 35 European countries, fewer than 1 in 5 computer science graduates are women. Points out that, addressing the gender STEM-related skills gap is all the more essential since job creation is increasingly concentrated in STEM-related sectors, with some 120,000 ICT new jobs being created each year.

The CoR detects significant opportunities for regional and civic universities in disseminating STEM, as STEM-related university courses and disciplines can be internationalised, which can make them particularly attractive for ambitious universities.

The CoR considers that, firstly, it would be helpful to extend STEM- and STE(A)M-related awareness and promotion activities to parents and, secondly, that it is crucial to identify the best methods for attracting children's attention in an appropriate way to STEM subjects at a very early stage, starting at the pre-school level.

The CoR calls on the European Commission to take the necessary measures concerning the continuation and renewal of the Bologna process and work leading to the automatic recognition of qualifications, and urges it to ensure that the question of the rapid mutual recognition of qualifications and training in the industry and the educational institutions.

The Commission is aware of the gender segregation patterns across different professions. In many Member States, the percentage of women Information and Communication Technology (ICT) professionals is indeed low, while in others it is nearly equal to that of men. At school level, girls are as well prepared in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects as boys, according to Organisation's for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA survey.

The Commission agrees with this assessment. The Commission will closely monitor alliances funded under the European Universities initiative, especially regional and civic universities, to ensure sharing of good practice in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) teaching as well as sharing of related course content.

The Commission agrees with this view, which is already present in some Commission documents (e.g. the final report of the Thematic Working Group on Mathematics, Science and Technology).

The Commission agrees with this call. The Commission is a member of the intergovernmental Bologna Process. It is an active participant in the Bologna peer support groups, which are aimed at tackling the uneven implementation of key commitments, contributing to the debate on the future of the
the STEM and arts areas be addressed urgently and appropriately.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The CoR encourages Member States and the European Commission, using the available tools and in agreement with local and regional authorities, by involving regional and civic universities too, to map out curricula for STEM and STE(A)M at different levels of education.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due to the subsidiarity principle, the Commission is not in a position ‘to map out curricula for STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and STE(A)M (science, technology, engineering, (art) and mathematics) at different levels of education’. However, through the Open Method of Coordination, the Commission plays a supportive role in the Member States’ efforts to develop their own curricula.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The CoR urges the European Commission and Eurostat to fine-tune the data-gathering method in line with their relevance, to ensure that education systems in which STEM are taught as separate disciplines and systems based on a holistic interpretation of STEM can be clearly distinguished, and to clarify the overall regional dimension, which will also make it easier to prepare local and regional STEM strategies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission is fully aware of the importance of the quality of the data obtained, and Eurostat is fully engaged in the constant improvement of data-gathering methods in all sectors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</strong></th>
<th><strong>European Commission position</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4. Reiterates the need to incorporate the capacity to significantly reduce the risk and consequences of disasters in all EU policy strategies in terms of investment, so that public funds help communities to become more resilient to the adverse effects of disasters and ensure that people's lives are not at risk. It regrets that under the Structural Funds and the European investment funds in general, and the Cohesion Fund in particular, a disaster risk assessment is not a prerequisite for carrying out infrastructure projects financed by the EU; | A range of European Union policies and financial instruments support disaster risk management and resilience building. In line with the Article 5(1)(h) of the Decision 1313/2013/EU on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism, the Commission promotes the use of various Union funds that may support sustainable disaster prevention and encourage Member States and regions to exploit those funding opportunities. Moreover, one of the objectives of the recent revision of the Union Civil Protection legislation was to further strengthen the synergies between the different Union policies and instruments supporting disaster risk management. Under the European Structural and Investment Funds, disaster risk assessment is a prerequisite for investing in measures on disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. In 2014-2020, Member States choosing to invest in this area were required to have a national or regional risk assessment guiding these investments. For 2021-2027, the Commission has proposed an ‘Effective disaster risk management framework’ as a prerequisite (enabling condition). The framework would have to include, among other things, a description of key risks, assessed in accordance with the Union Civil Protection legislation. The Commission’s proposal also requires climate proofing of all investments in infrastructure with an expected

---

5. Whilst noting that the EU currently has two instruments (the Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU Solidarity Fund) which it intends to use to contribute to response coordination and building resilience to natural disasters, a more robust multi-level governance approach is needed to achieve the objectives of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR), in close engagement with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Moreover, the principle of investing in disaster risk reduction must be firmly embedded in the future of Europe, including in the European Semester and the EU funds;

51/71

In addition to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism and the European Union Solidarity Fund, a range of other financial instruments support disaster risk management and resilience building. European Structural and Investment Funds represent the largest source of European Union financing in this area. Cohesion policy will continue supporting disaster risk management also in 2021-2027, under the policy objective 2 'A greener, low-carbon Europe'; specific objective 2.4 'Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience'. Other EU instruments that support actions relevant to natural and man-made disaster risk management include the LIFE programme, Horizon 2020/Europe, and the Internal Security Fund.

Disaster risk management received attention in the European Semester of spring 2019. The Commission has recommended 20 Member States in their country reports (Annex D) to invest in disaster resilience using Cohesion policy funds for 2021-2027.

As regards the implementation of the Sendai Framework, in 2019 the Commission and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction committed to strengthen the complementarity between the European Union and the United Nations work on risk reduction. Further synergies will be sought in such areas as national disaster risk reduction strategies, national platforms for disaster risk reduction and reporting under the Sendai framework and the European Union legislation.
8. Notes that Europe has a very diverse landscape in terms of risk management structures and methods at national or appropriate sub-national levels. The cross-border dimension of risks could therefore benefit from a more systematic approach to future risk assessments;

| Civil protection and disaster risk management are a national competence, organised in accordance with Member States' institutional and legal frameworks. In line with the Article 196 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Union acts only to support and supplement the action of Member States. The Commission agrees that the cross-border dimension of risks would benefit from more attention. This was highlighted in the Commission Staff Working Document ‘Overview of Natural and Man-made Disaster Risks the European Union May Face’ [SWD (2017) 176]. In order to improve the sharing of information on cross-border risks and measures, a new provision was included in the Decision 1313/2013/EU, as amended by Decision 420/2019. Member States are now required to share information on prevention and preparedness measures, particularly those needed to address key risks that have cross-border impacts. The Commission, together with the Member States, is currently developing reporting guidelines to facilitate the structured sharing of this information. |

11. Highlights the need to strengthen risk management governance by promoting cross-border collaboration;

| The Commission has acknowledged this need with the recent amendment of the Decision 1313/2013/EU. A new objective was added in Article 3, which now stipulates that the Union Civil Protection Mechanism shall support, complement and facilitate coordination of Member States’ action to step up cooperation and coordination activities at cross-border level. The amended legislation also stipulates that the Commission, in cooperation with Member States, may establish specific consultation mechanisms to enhance appropriate prevention |

---

and preparedness planning and coordination among Member States that are prone to similar types of disasters, including for cross-border risks.

The Union Civil Protection Mechanism supports joint exercises and exchange of experts, which provide an opportunity for civil protection and disaster management actors to meet and exchange experience.

Cross-border collaboration activities can be co-financed by Interreg programmes.

| 13. Reiterates that it has approved\(^{24}\) the Commission's proposal for a regulation establishing a European cross-border mechanism\(^{25}\) as part of efforts to remove obstacles to cross-border cooperation, including in the area of disaster risk reduction. In order to achieve a better cross-border cooperation and prevent disasters, new preparatory projects can be launched for the most vulnerable regions, such as the outermost regions, the islands and the coastal regions; | The Commission agrees that the proposed European Cross-Border Mechanism is very relevant for disaster risk management (e.g. joint prevention of floods; joint or coordinated emergency services, etc.). Cooperation projects could be supported through Interreg and European Regional Development Fund programmes. The proposal for the European Cross-Border Mechanism is currently under interinstitutional negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. |
---|---|
| 17. Welcomes the fact that the European Parliament and the Council have reached a provisional agreement on strengthening the EU's current civil protection mechanism and the EU's response to disasters – rescEU – which, among other considerations, places greater emphasis on cross-border risks; | Decision 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism was amended by Decision 2019/420/EU\(^{26}\), which entered into force on 21 March 2019. |
| 19. Calls on the Member States to also involve local and regional authorities in the screening of planned investments in all | The Commission recalls that the 'partnership principle' is one of the key principles of the Cohesion policy that is also a legal obligation |

---

\(^{24}\) CoR opinion on the Cross-border mechanism (adopted on 5 December 2018, not yet published in the OJ).  
relevant programmes and in discussing possible changes; (Article 6 of the Commission’s proposal for the Common Provisions Regulation\(^\text{27}\)). It requires that each Member State engages in a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities so that they are involved in the development and implementation of Cohesion policy programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20.</th>
<th>Calls for more active implementation of cross-border disaster risk reduction projects, the aim being to make more extensive use of the Structural Funds designated for this purpose;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Would like to see more EU-level incentives directed towards local and regional levels to promote cross-border cooperation in disaster risk reduction, not least in the area of prevention, training and exercises;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disaster risk reduction is a key area for cross-border cooperation as many of the risks in border areas can be properly addressed only through cooperation (e.g. preventing floods, reducing pollution following an industrial accident, joint response capacities, etc.). The Commission encourages the use of Interreg and European Regional Development Fund programmes to invest in climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience. Actions may include also those aimed at improved governance of risk (e.g. cooperation between stakeholders, training, etc.).

The revised Union Civil Protection legislation (recital 14 of the Decision 420/2019\(^\text{28}\)) highlights the importance of regional and local authorities in disaster prevention and management and calls for their response capacities to be appropriately involved in any coordination and deployment activities carried out under the Mechanism, in accordance with Member States' institutional and legal frameworks.

| 23. | Believes it particularly important to use the European Civil Protection Mechanism and the EU Solidarity Fund to invest, including financially, in planning in relation to risk reduction, especially with a view to |

The Commission shares the Committee’s views on the importance of investing in disaster risk prevention and resilience, especially in view of climate change. A range of Union policies and financial instruments will continue supporting


Climate change and the resulting extreme events; these objectives, with the Cohesion policy funds offering the largest financial opportunities for EU Member States.

The recent revision of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism is also backed by a significantly increased budget, both for the prevention and response strands of action.

As regards the European Union Solidarity Fund, the Commission points out that the purpose of this Fund is to provide financial assistance for post-disaster response and recovery. Its limited budgetary resources and special mobilisation mechanism do not allow using it for preparedness and prevention purposes.

25. Hopes that scientific committees will be set up to define risk scenarios more accurately and promote knowledge and skills networking, bringing together specialist expertise based on similar risk factors for homogeneous areas (for example Mediterranean forest fires, sudden or gradual flooding in central Europe, etc.) and affording the possibility of rapid intervention and dialogue with local authorities in order to access financial, human and material resources;

The revised legislation on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, in particular the Article 13(1), provides for the creation of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network. It shall consist of civil protection and disaster management actors and institutions, including centres of excellence, universities and researchers. It should facilitate similar types of activities as those mentioned by the Committee in its opinion. For example, exchange of expertise in emergency management, including of young professionals and experienced volunteers, is already identified as a priority area. The Knowledge Network will also promote cooperation with international organisations and third countries, with a special emphasis on the European Union neighbourhood.

The Commission is in consultations with the national authorities to determine the content of activities and target groups to be covered by the Knowledge Network.

26. [...] Calls on the relevant institutions to consider developing compulsory insurance policies against natural disasters, to be standardised at European level, with insurance

One of the objectives of the 2013 European Union Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change is to promote the use of insurance against natural and man-made disasters.
premiums linked to the level of risk. This would raise awareness and promote understanding of the importance of prevention on the part of individuals, reduce the moral hazard and guarantee fair and uniform compensation for all European citizens.

A dedicated green paper was published the same year to encourage improvement in the ways insurers help manage climate risks, increase market penetration of natural disaster insurance and release the full potential of insurance pricing and other financial products. In 2017, the Commission commissioned a study providing an inventory, analysis and recommendations on insurance mechanisms to support climate-related damage prevention in the Union. The Commission is currently exploring options for further policy development as part of a possible revision of the European Union Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.

| 35. Underlines the need to boost e-learning platforms along the lines of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism training programme, for example, and to increase the availability of open online courses in the field of civil protection; |
| As part of the activities developing the new Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, the Commission will review its training programme and broaden access to e-learning platforms, when relevant to meet the objectives set in the Article 13 of the Decision 1313/2013/EU, as amended by Decision 420/2019. |

| 37. Highlights the need to promote a shared and standardised cross-border alert system, including real-time notification of any disruption or disaster that could have an impact on a region in another Member State; |
| Early warning systems are one of the backbones of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Article 8.c) of the Decision 1313/2013/EU provides the basis for the development and better integration of transnational detection and early warning and alert systems of European interest. In this regard, the Commission has been supporting the development of EU-wide information and early warning systems, such as the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) or the European Flood Awareness System (EFAS). The revised Union Civil Protection legislation (recital 14 of the Decision 420/2019) further recognises the need for on-going cooperation at local, regional and cross-border level with a view to establishing common alert systems for rapid intervention prior to the mobilisation of |

---

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>39.</strong> Requests that acronyms be introduced to refer to aid coordination centres at various territorial levels in order to standardise the terms used;</td>
<td>The Commission agrees on the need for a standardised terminology on disaster management across the different civil protection authorities and aid coordination centres. The Commission has therefore introduced a set of acronyms commonly used in correspondence with Member States in the Implementing Decision 2014/762/EU(^{30}) (annex III and V). Moreover, national and regional aid coordination centres get acquainted with the relevant terminology, including acronyms, in civil protection training and exercises carried out in cooperation with the Commission. Over 5 400 experts from Member States/Participating States to the Union Civil Protection Mechanism have been trained so far. The Commission holds on average nearly 50 trainings on the mechanism per year. Furthermore, the Common Emergency and Information System (CECIS) ensures daily interaction between the Commission’s Emergency Response Coordination Centre and national and international authorities. The system spells out all the relevant and frequently used acronyms, and serves all Member States. The Commission is considering including a list of commonly used acronyms on a website easily accessible to national and regional civil protection authorities and aid coordination centres across Member States and Participating States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>40.</strong> Calls for standardised communication on prevention and for shared operational procedures in emergencies;</td>
<td>The Commission supports and complements prevention, preparedness and response efforts of Member States by focusing on areas where the joint European approach is more effective than</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following a request for assistance through the Mechanism, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre mobilises response assistance, including expertise. There are a number of guidelines agreed between the Commission and Member States on various aspects of operational procedures. Host Nation Support guidelines, Technical Assistance and Support guidelines and Expert Profiles guidelines all contribute to a smoother emergency response. Preparation of Standard Operating Procedures for European Union civil protection modules is scheduled in the near future.

The Emergency Response Coordination Centre is also part of the UN initiative ‘Global Crisis Centre Network’ promoting information exchange among regional crises centres.

45. Strongly supports the "b-solutions" project of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), which aims to identify legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border cooperation in disaster prevention and reduction. Points out that in the first call for proposals in 2018, the AEBR identified ten such instances which were turned into pilot projects, but that many other obstacles have yet to be resolved (ambulances, fire engines or helicopters that can enter some border regions but not others, administrative formalities for transferring remains, asymmetrical cross-border service provision, problems relating to insurance, recognition of diplomas, etc.). Encourages all regions facing similar obstacles to participate in future calls for proposals;

The Commission welcomes the support of the Committee. The Border Focal Point, set in the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, closely follows the implementation of ‘b-solutions project’. The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund, under Technical Assistance. The second call for proposals has already been implemented, under which 33 new cases of border obstacles have been selected and are being addressed.

The Commission intends to provide further support to address similar border obstacles even after the current timeline of the ‘b-solutions’ project.

32 The Border Focal Point was established as a follow-up action to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on “Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions”, COM(2017)534 final.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</th>
<th>European Commission position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The CoR welcomes the communication on A clean planet for all and calls on the Commission to frame an even more ambitious and achievable roadmap by adopting measures to limit global warming to 1.5°C and prioritising the most ambitious scenarios. Also, calls on the Commission to evaluate the impact of the different scenarios on climate health, environmental, economic and social aspects and to propose a corresponding comprehensive regulatory framework based on this evaluation and in line with the strategy to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</td>
<td>The Commission welcomes the Committee’s support for its proposal and takes note of the call for increasing ambition by proposing a corresponding comprehensive regulatory framework. The Commission’s Communication ‘Clean planet for all’ sets a long-term direction of travel to align and focus efforts by citizens, stakeholders, businesses, industry, authorities and investors towards reaching climate neutrality. It does not in itself set interim targets nor specific policies. Appropriate policies would have to follow once there is an agreement on the EU long-term strategy. The vision as well as its underpinning in-depth analysis, explain the variety of (technology) options, solutions and the necessary enabling conditions that would pave the way for the transformation to climate neutrality by 2050. The in-depth analysis also presents the expected economic, social and environmental implications of the various scenarios.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The CoR reiterates its call on the Member States and the European Commission to establish a permanent multi-level platform for dialogue on energy as defined in the regulation on the governance of the energy union; states in this context its willingness to set up, if requested by the European Commission, a structure for technical exchanges on implementing the Clean Energy Package.</td>
<td>The Commission appreciates the important role of the Committee and its relevant network for facilitating cooperation at regional and local level and welcomes the Committee’s suggestion to support technical exchanges at local or regional level on implementing the Clean Energy Package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Package at local or regional level.</td>
<td>The Commission fully agrees that the deep social and economic transformation towards climate neutrality has to be a joint commitment and endeavour requiring endorsement and ownership by all actors, namely by regional and local authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The CoR notes the crucial role that regions and local authorities play in delivering public policy on climate and energy and in nurturing the behavioural changes necessary for their effective implementation and ensuring the acceptance of these changes by all citizens, following a defined decarbonisation strategy geared to achieving the zero emissions goal; in this connection highlights the initiatives undertaken by the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and calls on the Commission to continue promoting this and endorse similar initiatives to boost action at local level and to set up a permanent consultation mechanism based on the Talanoa Dialogue.</td>
<td>The Commission has engaged in outreach to Member States throughout 2019 to support national and subnational debates on climate neutrality with citizens, including youth, civil society, stakeholders, academia, businesses, cities and authorities. The Commission also promotes local climate action at the local level by means of the European Covenant of Mayors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. calls on the Commission to guarantee that the national energy and climate plans (NECPs) and national long-term plans are harmonised with the Paris Agreement, the 2050 strategy and the SDG's; considers it crucial that they are drafted</td>
<td>The Commission is committed to continuing to engage in inclusive EU-wide debates and action. Also, under the Energy Union Governance Regulation, public consultations are an integral part of developing National Energy and Climate Plans and Member States are required to establish multilevel climate and energy dialogues. Furthermore, the Commission appreciates that the Committee is well placed to understand the needs of regional and local authorities and could promote climate action through its networks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

using participatory, multilevel dialogue and are based on best regional and local practice; also suggests shortening the interval for periodical review of these plans and providing an institutional framework for the system of regionally determined contributions (RDC) and locally determined contributions (LDC) to link it with the system of nationally determined contributions (NDC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. The CoR calls on the Commission to actively take into account the particular vulnerability of certain areas and people undergoing transition to a climate neutral Europe so as to avoid, the rejection of the transition process; also calls for the establishment of a European Climate Neutrality observatory to assist in mapping and monitoring such vulnerabilities together with a renewed EU skills audit under the EU Skills panorama.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Commission acknowledges that the transition to climate neutrality may have substantial social and distributional impacts on people and regions, including significant labour reallocation across sectors and occupations, and profound changes in future skill requirements (See Employment and Social Developments in Europe Annual Review 2019[^3]). This social dimension needs to be integrated in all climate and energy policies from the outset, including through accompanying and compensatory measures, to ensure a just transition and public support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transition must be supported by appropriate EU, national and regional policies and financing, addressing the challenges encountered by the most vulnerable regions, sectors and social groups. The EU budget, employment and social policies, as well as cohesion policies should further help to reduce economic, social and territorial disparities across the Union.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member States should ensure that their integrated national energy and climate plans take into consideration the latest country-specific recommendations issued in the context of the European Semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU cooperation on skills intelligence, such as the analysis and forecasting of skills needs made available through the Skills Panorama,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

can support both policy and investment decisions for a just transition to a climate neutral Europe. Validating the skills acquired outside formal education and training, starting for example with a ‘skills audit’ or assessment, opens the path towards the reskilling or upskilling needed for a smooth transition.

In its 2018 Communication on ‘Building a stronger Europe’, the Commission announced an initiative to ‘support the development of trans-national platforms of Centres of vocational excellence’. The Centres will promote a proactive role for vocational education and training in local and regional economic development, and help having in place strategic and systematic plans and processes for engaging with local and regional agendas for social and economic development. A particular focus will be on skills to support the transition to a circular and greener economy to meet emerging professional needs for green skills and sustainable development.

In addition, the Commission’s President-elect has stated in her political guidelines the need to support the people and regions most affected through a new Just Transition Fund.

11. The CoR calls on the European Commission to continue promoting energy efficiency of buildings as a priority in order to cut the emissions from existing buildings and to ensure that public subsidies and financial instruments enable owners to improve the energy efficiency of buildings by renovating them. In addition, the necessary investments and state aid should be classified as capital costs so as to increase the room for manoeuvre for local and regional governments.

The Commission recognises the importance of energy efficiency in buildings and its role in cutting emissions. The Commission has been emphasizing the investment gap associated with improving the energy performance of buildings, which represents over 70% of the investment gap until 2030. As a first step in promoting energy efficiency in buildings, the Commission will review the final National Energy and Climate Plans to...

35 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic And Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies (COM (2018) 268 final).
authorities. This plays a major role in raising the average annual rate of building renovation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ensure: 1) the sufficient ambition of Member State contributions and 2) an adequate description of the planned measures. In doing so, the Commission will pay particular attention to the long-term renovation strategies that the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (Directive 2010/31/EU)(^\text{36}) requires Member States to establish and implement, with the objective of decarbonising their building stock by 2050. Under the same Directive, Member States must also facilitate access to mechanisms that will support mobilising investments in renovation, paying particular attention to the use of subsidies and financial instruments. Private investors will underwrite most of the investments in energy efficiency. To facilitate these investment, the Commission, together with the European Investment Bank and other financial actors, is developing measures to guarantee affordable access to finance (primarily in the context of InvestEU), technical assistance and capacity building (under InvestEU and the LIFE programme) and, when needed, public support measures.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. The CoR calls on the Commission to promote a circular approach in the designing, erection and operation of new buildings, which will need to be sustainable or include energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources, starting with the example of the Level(s) initiative. Climate and environmental performance standards must also be set from a life-cycle perspective for building materials and processes and for the documentation of materials used, which will require continued investment in standards, ecodesign requirements, environmental product declarations, and information systems for life-cycle analyses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Commission welcomes the support to life cycle thinking in the building sector, which is necessary to be able to tackle the challenges linked to climate change and resource use. The Commission considers energy efficiency and use of renewable resources as aspects of sustainability, which need to be tackled next to other aspects of life cycle impacts, such as embodied energy, construction and demolition waste, water consumption etc. The focus should be on the optimisation of the overall environmental impact reduction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. The CoR calls on the Commission to unlock European funding to speed up the roll out of recharging points for vehicles to ensure that current infrastructure does not hamper the uptake of clean mobility across Europe to meet the future demand.

The Commission is already financing alternative fuels infrastructure in various funding programmes (in particular Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and future InvestEU), via grants or loans depending on the specific technology financing needs. This ensures both the development of a sufficient pipeline of projects and good market impact of EU financing, and will at the same time avoid market distortions.

Alternative fuels infrastructure, including recharging infrastructure, is eligible for Connecting Europe Facility funding: the last co-funding call totalled €1.35 billion, with €350 million earmarked for deployment of alternative fuels specifically at second cut-off date.

In March 2019, Member States approved the dedicated blending facility under the Connecting Europe Facility. The European Investment Bank is pooling investment under its Cleaner Transport Finance Facility. Both facilities target, inter alia, alternative fuels infrastructure projects and therefore also recharging infrastructure.

On top of all this, in relation to the new Connecting Europe Facility, the Commission has proposed that up to 60% of the budget should be earmarked for climate related investment. This marks yet another increase of our ambition compared to the last programming period. This will undoubtedly also have an effect on the amount of funding available for alternative fuels infrastructure, including electric recharging points.

31. The CoR calls on the European Commission to bring regions and local authorities on board in implementing the Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) and the regulation on the inclusion of Under the Energy Union Governance Regulation, public consultations are an integral part of developing National Energy and Climate Plans and Member States are
greenhouse gas emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), setting emission reduction targets for 2030 and configuring realistic initiatives with which to achieve them.

32. The CoR highlights the competences cities and regions have in collecting the data needed to carry out the inventory of GHG emissions in sectors covered by LULUCF and ESR and recommends that the Member States and the Commission support them in promoting their capacities.

40. The CoR notes the importance of making climate neutrality, environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation cross-cutting components in all funds and funding programmes that are required to include climate neutral economy targets to be met through the fixing of specific indicators and welcomes the Greening the European Semester initiative, while calling for further efforts on this front; in this context, also suggests the inclusion of climate-related indicators in the Commission's Alert Mechanism Report framework.

required to establish multilevel climate and energy dialogues. The dialogue may be conducted by means of any national structure, such as a website, public consultation platform or another interactive communication tool. Member States are thereby encouraged to engage and coordinate with local actors and subnational authorities in implementing their national targets.

In the context of the political guidelines of President-elect von der Leyen, the Commission intends to refocus the European Semester into an instrument that integrates the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure a coherent approach in the monitoring of Member States' progress on SDG performance, the European Semester will use Eurostat's yearly Sustainable Development Goals Monitoring Report as a priority data reference set. For the enhanced sustainability analysis within the country reports, further alignment of SDG-related evidence is envisaged.

The Commission also proposed important initiatives to boost sustainable investment in the EU during the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework. The proposed InvestEU Programme will aim at supporting investments in the EU and will have an ambitious climate, environment and sustainability focus. This will be reflected in climate and environmental targets, as well as in the process of sustainability proofing of projects from the climate, environmental and social perspective.

The European Green Deal, proposed by the Commission's President-elect, would also include a proposal for a Sustainable Europe Investment Plan with the aim of supporting
44. The CoR welcomes the reference to expected savings in the health sector as a consequence of climate and environmental policies and calls on the Commission to further explore the possibility of quantifying such savings estimates in the health sector by identifying specific indicators, including with the involvement of the WHO; in this regards points to the experience of a structure like the WHO Healthy Cities Network and calls for more efforts to create synergies between such initiatives and those focused on the energy transition and climate change in cities.

The Commission initiative on the State of Health in the EU monitors the impact of mortality due to air pollution and extreme weather conditions in particular in the regular report ‘Health at a Glance: Europe 2018’, prepared jointly with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. In addition, the Commission is also aware of the indicators from the World Health Organization’s Environment and Health Information System (ENHIS).

Based on the work of international organisations, the Commission is ready to explore in more detail, including with modelling, the negative impacts of pollution in terms of premature death, increase of health expenditure and reduction of labour productivity, as well as to measure possible gains through policy action. Air pollution is the single largest environmental health risk in Europe that is monitored in the annual ‘Air Quality in Europe’ reports of the European Environment Agency.

Furthermore, the work of the World Health Organization’s Healthy Cities Network, which helps countries to develop policies and activities for their fight against childhood obesity, was also described in the mid-term evaluation report of the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity.

48. Welcomes EU’s ambitious goal of promoting the adoption of policies and initiatives at global level to reverse the current unsustainable emissions trajectory and calls on the EU institutions and Member States to further a stable, lasting and systematic involvement of regions and local authorities in the implementation of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development and

The Commission considers the Committee among the key stakeholders and is supportive of its participation in the activities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Marrakesh Partnership for Global Action Agenda.

Members of the Committee can be accredited as EU representatives to attend stakeholder

the related 17 Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement, including by involving the CoR in preparatory work on COP25, in order to ensure that the EU’s negotiation position is supported by all tiers of government.

49. Calls for a representative of the CoR to have observer status in all preparatory work of the UNFCCC bodies in order to make sure that the needs and the potential of contributing with concrete measures of local authorities and the regions are taken properly into account and can feed into the open, inclusive and transparent evaluation of the joint work carried out within the overall review.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>events and contact groups of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change open to observers, however, the EU is officially represented by the Commission both in the context of the technical intergovernmental negotiations process and in the work of the preparatory bodies of the Framework Convention. The Commission will continue to provide regular in-depth briefings during and in-between the negotiation sessions and will make all efforts to ensure an inclusive process.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

67/71
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</th>
<th>European Commission position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[The Committee of the Regions]</td>
<td>The Commission agrees with the Committee’s opinion and finds that the opinion is balanced in assessing what needs to be done at European level and what is in the remit of Member States and local authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- takes the view that limiting excessive energy costs cannot be left to the sole discretion of competition and market self-regulation and that the EU must therefore put in place legal frameworks providing Member States and local authorities with the right tools to ensure affordable energy. To keep energy prices low, the EU and other authorities must first ensure that there is sufficient supply on the energy market, that monopoly pricing is resisted, and that methods of promoting energy transition are cost-effective and do not drive up prices excessively;</td>
<td>The Commission already consulted Member States on the Clean Energy Package through the consultation process and its negotiation with the Council and the European Parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- calls on the EU institutions [...] to consider the possibility of a moratorium on the termination or suspension of public services due to a failure to pay, so that no household is left without supply of basic heating or cooling;</td>
<td>Member States must define energy poverty and assess the number of households in energy poverty; if the number in energy poverty is significant (or if they have regulated prices for those in energy poverty) Member States must set objectives to reduce it and report on progress in their energy and climate plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directive 2019/944 on common rules for the internal market for electricity, and in particular its Article 28(1) ‘Vulnerable consumers’ requires Member States to define and take appropriate actions to protect vulnerable consumers (including those in remote areas) including by the prohibition of disconnections of electricity in critical times.</td>
<td>Directive 2019/944 on common rules for the internal market for electricity, and in particular its Article 28(1) ‘Vulnerable consumers’ requires Member States to define and take appropriate actions to protect vulnerable consumers (including those in remote areas) including by the prohibition of disconnections of electricity in critical times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namely, Article 28(1) provides ‘Member States shall take appropriate measures to protect customers and shall ensure, in particular, that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. In this context, each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

... emphasises that it is not possible to apply the same solutions to the different regions of the EU. Local and regional authorities also need to adopt a new comprehensive approach.

Member State shall define the concept of vulnerable customers which may refer to energy poverty and, inter alia, to the prohibition of disconnection of electricity to such customers in critical times. The concept of vulnerable customers may include income levels, the share of energy expenditure of disposable income, the energy efficiency of homes, critical dependence on electrical equipment for health reasons, age or other criteria. Member States shall ensure that rights and obligations linked to vulnerable customers are applied. In particular, they shall take measures to protect customers in remote areas. They shall ensure high levels of consumer protection, particularly with respect to transparency regarding contractual terms and conditions, general information and dispute settlement mechanisms.

Moreover, Article 10(11) of the same Directive stipulates that ‘Suppliers shall provide household customers with adequate information on alternative measures to disconnection sufficiently in advance of any planned disconnection. Such alternative measures may refer to sources of support to avoid disconnection, prepayment systems, energy audits, energy consultancy services, alternative payment plans, debt management advice or disconnection moratoria and not constitute an extra cost to the customers facing disconnection.’

The Clean Energy Package for all Europeans includes measures to protect vulnerable consumers and those in energy poverty from limiting excessive costs. More specifically, Article 28(2) of Directive 2019/944 requests Member States to take measures to ensure the necessary supply to vulnerable customers such as ‘such as providing benefits by means of their social security systems’ or ‘providing for support for energy efficiency improvements, to address energy poverty’ without impeding the market.
to finding appropriate means, by involving relevant local government offices with expertise in various fields in order to find the best remedy;

- considers that local and regional authorities should facilitate the provision of free and independent advice to the public;

- calls on the European Commission to look at the conditions for extending European Energy Poverty Observatory’s activity, to extend its purpose and work as far as is necessary, and to develop possibilities for data collection and evaluation [...].

- calls for closer cooperation between the European Energy Poverty Observatory, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Eurostat;

- stresses that it is essential to include functioning.

Further to that, Article 59(1) of the same Directive stipulates that the regulatory authorities in each Member State shall monitor, among others, ‘prices for household customers including prepayment systems’, ‘the relationship between household and wholesale prices, the evolution of grid tariffs and levies, and complaints by household customers’. Additionally, Article 59(1), letter (r) stipulates that the regulatory authorities should help to ‘ensure, together with other relevant authorities, that the consumer protection measures are effective and enforced’.

The Committee’s approach is also in line with the Commission’s approach, when the opinion underlines that the best way to tackle energy poverty is through investment in energy efficiency and truly functioning energy markets that deliver low prices. Indeed, the next challenge is the correct transposition and implementation of the relevant provisions of the Clean Energy Package on this topic.

The Commission agrees on the need for increased synergies between the Energy Poverty Observatory and the Covenant of Mayors. This collaboration has already started in 2018, continues in 2019 and will carry on in the years to come.

Recital (67) of the Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001 reads as follows: ‘Empowering jointly acting renewables self-consumers also provides opportunities for renewable energy communities to advance energy efficiency at household level and helps fight energy poverty through reduced consumption and lower supply tariffs. Member States should take appropriate advantage of that opportunity by, inter alia, assessing the possibility to enable participation

---

transforming energy consumers into "prosumers" as an instrument for eradicating energy poverty. To this end, initiatives should be encouraged at all levels [...];

- considers improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock to be one of the main areas of work for local and regional authorities and urges them to avoid focusing exclusively on social housing, particularly in Member States with low rates of social housing; highlights the need to allocate as large a share of EU funds as possible to an overall renovation of the building stock which takes account of energy poverty [...];

by households that might otherwise not be able to participate, including vulnerable consumers and tenants.'

In the long term, the Union's building stock needs to be converted to net zero emissions buildings. This poses a challenge for citizens on low incomes (and who may also be affected by energy poverty). Accordingly, Member States must outline relevant national actions that contribute to the alleviation of energy poverty in their long-term strategy for renovation of the national building stock, and take energy poverty into account in meeting their energy efficiency obligations by ensuring a proportion of measures are implemented among vulnerable households. These obligations are coupled with information, notification and reporting requirements under the Governance Regulation (EU) 2018/1999\(^4\).

---

Pour enregistrement dans Adonis.
Annette

-----Original Message-----
From: ve_sg.dsg3.g11(SG) <sg-dsg3-unite-g1@ec.europa.eu>
Sent: 05 November 2019 16:22
To: Cervilla Martinez Pedro <pedro.cervillamartinez@cor.europa.eu>
