

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

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

PLENARY SESSION OF OCTOBER 2017

77th REPORT

N°	TITLE	REFERENCES
DG REGIO		
1.	Strengthening territorial resilience: empowering regions and cities to face globalisation Rapporteur-General: Micaela FANELLI (IT/PES)	COM(2017) 0240 final COR-2017-03202-00-02-PAC-TRA ECON-VI/024
DG GROW		
2.	Space Strategy for Europe Rapporteur: Andres JAADLA (EE/ALDE)	COM(2016) 705 final COR-2016-06726-00-00-PAC-TRA ENVE-VI/022
3.	The services package: A services economy that works for Europeans Rapporteur: Jean-Luc VANRAES (BE/ALDE)	COM(2016) 824 final COM(2016) 823 final COM(2016) 822 final COM(2016) 821 final COM(2016) 820 final COM(2016) 822 final/2 COR-2017-01195-00-01-PAC-TRA ECON-VI/022 Own-initiative opinion

DG BUDG		
4.	Reform of EU own resources within the next MFF post-2020 Rapporteur: Isabelle BOUDINEAU (FR/PES)	COR-2017-01530-00-00-PAC-TRA COTER-VI/026 Own-initiative opinion
DG MOVE		
5.	Future of Connecting Europe Facility - Transport Rapporteur: Ximo PUIG I FERRER (ES/PES)	COR-2017-01531-00-01-PAC-TRA COTER-VI/027 Own-initiative opinion
6.	A European strategy on Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems Rapporteur: Bouke ARENDS (NL/PES)	COM(2016) 766 final COR-2017-02552-00-00-PAC-TRA COTER-VI/028
DG ENV		
7.	Environmental Implementation Review Rapporteur: Andrew VARAH COOPER (UK/EA)	COM(2016) 316 final COR-2017-00836-00-00-PAC-TRA ENVE-VI/021
DG CLIMA		
8.	Climate finance: an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement Rapporteur: Marco DUS (IT/PES)	COR-2017-02108-00-00-PAC-TRA ENVE-VI/024 Own-initiative opinion

DG NEAR		
9.	A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action Rapporteur-General: Marcin OCIEPA (PL/ECR)	JOIN(2017) 0021 COR-2017-03666-00-01-PAC-TRA CIVEX-VI/027 Own initiative opinion
DG CNECT		
10.	Building a European Data Economy Rapporteur: Kieran McCARTHY (IE/EA)	COM(2017) 9 final COR-2017-00853-00-01-PAC-TRA SEDEC-VI/025
DG EMPL		
11.	The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe Rapporteur-General: Mauro D'ATTIS (IT/EPP)	COR-2017-03141-00-00-PAC-TRA SEDEC-VI/027
DG JRC		
12.	A European policy on the seismic requalification of buildings and infrastructure Rapporteur: Vito SANTARSIERO (IT/PES)	COR-2017-01036-00-00-PAC-TRA NAT-VI/020 Own-initiative opinion
DG HOME		
13.	The protection of children in migration Rapporteur: Yoomi RENSTRÖM (SV/PES)	COM(2017) 211 final COR-2017-02782-00-01-PAC-TRA CIVEX-VI/025 Own-initiative opinion

<p>N°1 Strengthening territorial resilience: empowering regions and cities to face globalisation COM (2017) 240 final – CoR 2017/03202 – ECON-VI/024 125th Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Ms Micaela FANELLI (IT/PES) DG REGIO – Commissioner CREȚU</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>32. The Committee of the Regions would have expected the reflection paper to propose concrete measures for an upgrade of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, addressing some of its shortcomings, inter alia: its limited budgetary scope (EUR 150 million per annum for the period 2014-2020); the lengthy procedures due to the fact that is not part of the European Union's Multiannual financial framework; the high ratio of co-financing by Member States required (minimum 40%). Therefore the Committee of the Regions calls for: complementing the EGF with a preventive arm; increasing its budget to at least EUR 500 million per annum; integrating it into the Multiannual financial framework; lowering significantly the criteria for triggering the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund; ensuring synergies with the European Structural and Investment Funds; ensuring greater flexibility in order to respond to the specific needs of regions and territories;</p>	<p>The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) mid-term evaluation (2014-2016) has identified similar shortcomings of the current European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, i.e. the need to speed-up procedures, the need for more flexibility, for less administrative burden, etc.</p> <p>In designing the future European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, and without prejudice to the negotiations foreseen for the future Multiannual financial framework, the Commission will consider the recommendations made by the Committee of the Regions on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund future budget, the simplified triggering criteria and a greater flexibility to respond to the specific needs of regions where mass redundancies occur.</p>
<p>34. Our priority should therefore be to focus on investment needs at local and regional level, so that all regions can benefit from the internal market and be better prepared to meeting the challenges</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee of the Regions' opinion regarding investment needs at local and regional level. The contribution of smart specialisation to Europe's</p>

of globalisation. The European Structural and Investment Funds, and in particular the European Fund for Strategic Investments, should be coordinated to help regions with their "smart" specialisation strategies, and made effectively accessible to all regions via a gradual innovation process, which should include all territorial actors.

innovation investment potential is important to accompany the industrial transition process and help accelerate uptake of new products and services across the European Union. As a prerequisite for cohesion policy investment it directs the European Structural Investment Funds in priority areas identified at the local and regional level through the inclusive bottom-up process of entrepreneurial discovery. This gradual innovation process is also happening now in the framework of the Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms where interregional partnerships are built to generate European Union strategic investments in innovation increasing local and regional resilience to global impacts. This approach should help regions develop investment pipelines for projects which are bankable for support from financial instruments, in particular through the European Fund for Strategic Investments, helping to attract private investment by backing up innovative projects that may need risk-coverage. These should help projects which are small in nature to be bundled together in investment platforms, bringing together different European Union funds in the most efficient way and involving the private sector where appropriate.

N°2 Space Strategy for Europe
COM(2016) 705 final – CoR 2017/06726 – ENVE-VI/022
125th Plenary Session – October 2017
Rapporteur – Mr Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE)
DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>19. The European Committee of the Regions stresses that the regional dimension is essential in bringing the benefits of space closer to users and thus putting users at the centre of a European space strategy. Local and regional authorities have the competence and willingness to be involved in the implementation of European space policy, as it also supports smart specialisation strategies in many regions.</p> <p>18. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the fact that the Space Strategy for Europe takes into account the importance of regional participation in its implementation</p> <p>20. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the fact that many regions have joined the Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies (NEREUS), which points to the growing importance of space for regional economies.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the support of the Committee of the Regions. Regional public authorities are indeed extremely important and knowledgeable actors in the chain to maximise the social and economic benefits of the European Union programmes.</p>
<p>30. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to ensure that long-term funding for the operation of Copernicus infrastructure is guaranteed using the European Union budget in future, in order to guarantee both financial viability and transparency and democratic oversight of the funding;</p>	<p>The Commission aims at ensuring the continuity of the current European Union space activities, including Copernicus and the European global navigation satellite systems Galileo and the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS). However, the level of funding to be allocated to space in the next multiannual financial</p>

	framework will be the result of the decision of the European Parliament and Council.
27. The Committee of the Regions calls for new ways of funding to be sought for the development and large-scale use of applications, involving the Structural Funds and the banks and in collaboration with the European Space Agency (ESA). Given the problems with the financing of investment in research and development projects, it is worth improving the financing of research projects carried out in collaboration with research and development institutes and economic operators;	<p>Maintaining Europe as a main player in space will indeed require joint efforts, investments and risk taking by all actors.</p> <p>The Space Strategy has identified the need to use innovative and adapted financing schemes to support entrepreneurship and small companies.</p>
2. The Committee of the Regions strongly supports the request of the European Parliament for a comprehensive Communication Strategy about the benefits of space technologies for citizens and business;	The Commission is working to increase public awareness of European space activities. It will consider the possibility of a comprehensive Communication Strategy, as suggested by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.
42. The Committee of the Regions could provide more effective support to the implementation and execution of the Copernicus programme at local and regional level if it was a full permanent member of the programme's user forum and could send an official representative to that forum. This would take account of the importance of local actors in terms of the use of Copernicus data;	Local and Regional Authorities have a central role to play in setting up the proper ecosystem for new space applications to emerge and thrive, notably by favouring cross-fertilisation between universities, research centres, public authorities and industry (in particular start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises). This is the reason why the Commission, together with representatives from Copernicus Participating Countries, approved inclusion of a representative of the Committee of the Regions as observer in the Copernicus User Forum.
32. The Committee of the Regions underlines the important role of space	The Commission welcomes the recognition by the Committee of the

<p>monitoring and satellite navigation systems, such as Galileo and Copernicus, enabling a timely response to natural disasters such as earthquakes, forest fires, landslides and floods;</p> <p>The Committee of the Regions calls for this to be duly reflected in the development of down-stream services for local and regional authorities. An effective space strategy is a crucial component of sustainable and resilient development, helping save lives as well as helping protect the environment and properties.</p>	<p>Regions regarding the important role of the European Union space programmes in crisis and disaster management. Furthermore, the Commission would like to recall the important role of Copernicus Emergency Management Service which was activated more than 80 times in 2017 alone to deal with natural disasters across Europe and other parts of the world¹, as well as the contribution of Galileo and the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service to assistance to vehicle accident victims (eCall) and air traffic control.</p>
<p>4. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the fact that the European Union and the European Space Agency joined forces in bringing forward European cooperation in space by signing the European Union - European Space Agency Joint Statement on shared visions and goals on 26 October 2016.</p>	<p>The Commission and the European Space Agency collaborate closely in all European Union space programmes, such as Galileo and Copernicus. In addition, important steps have been made to harmonise the roadmaps for research and development between the European Space Agency and Horizon 2020.</p>
<p>6. The Committee of the Regions is convinced that the only way for the European Union's space strategy to work in the long term, and thus for the success of the European space sector in creating jobs and growth to be ensured, is for all Member States to be actively involved. This can be achieved by means of concrete, targeted measures, and by focusing in particular on capacity-building and on including those Member States that are only just getting into the space sector.</p>	<p>The Commission shares the view that capacity building is an important objective in the implementation of the Space Strategy.</p>

¹ Disasters covered include: storms and floods in Europe, forest fires in Spain, Portugal, Greece, hurricane Ophelia in Ireland, windfall in Poland and internationally – Hurricanes Harvey and Irma in the US and the Caribbean as well as earthquakes in Mexico and Iraq.

10. A number of consultations have drawn attention to the need for high-level international cooperation² in economic, social and diplomatic terms, in order to secure European Union Member States' access to space and guarantee the security of space infrastructure. This includes space debris, the need for free orbits, and agreements on frequency and space traffic management. Space-related matters must be governed by international agreements. Local and regional authorities are ideal intermediaries between individual communities (societal groups, consumers, entrepreneurs and scientists).

The Commission concurs that participation in international fora, including international partnerships, are needed because the access and use of space are shaped by international rules, standards and governance systems.

Regarding the mitigation of risks posed by space debris, initial services are provided at European Union level since July 2016, through the European Union Space Surveillance and Tracking (SST) Support Framework. The aim of the proposal for a Space Programme is to ensure a better protection and tracking of satellites in space (Space Surveillance and Tracking, Space Situational Awareness).

Regarding the need to reserve adequate frequency bands for the operation of satellite services, the Commission is aware of the risks posed by the scarcity of this resource and will define a coherent approach between the European Union and Member States to protect space spectrum, in preparation for the World Radio Conference 2019.

² High Level Forum – Space as a driver for socio-economic sustainable development. Dubai, 24 November 2016.

<p>N°3 The services package: A service economy that works for Europeans COM(2016) 824 final, COM(2016) 823 final, COM(2016) 822 final, COM(2016) 821 final, COM(2016) 820 final – CoR 2017/01195 – ECON-VI/022 125th Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Mr Jean-Luc VANRAES DG GROW – Commissioner BIENKOWSKA</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>European services e-card</p>	
<p>11. The Committee of the Regions is opposed to the approach of shifting the main responsibility for the procedure to the home Member State authorities insofar as that is in conflict with the host Member State principle governing the Services Directive. Indeed, the services e-card should not prevent or hinder controls that the relevant public authorities in the host Member State must conduct on economic activities performed in its territory. The services e-card proposal as presented by the Commission would allow service providers to deal exclusively with the home Member State as an intermediary and harmonise the exchange of data based on the country-of-origin principle;</p>	<p>The Commission does not consider that the e-card proposal introduces the country of origin principle or shifts the responsibilities of control from the host to the home Member State. In fact, the prerogatives of the host Member State to carry out controls (in accordance with existing Union law) are completely unaffected by the proposal. The home Member State will – in essence – review that the service provider is legally established in its territory. It will not check that the service provider complies with the regulatory framework of the host Member State (this will continue to be done by the authorities in the host Member State).</p> <p>The co-legislators could decide to further clarify these points in the proposal. It is however important to note here that on 21 March 2018 the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) rejected the Commission’s services e-card proposals.</p>
<p>12. The Committee of the Regions wonders about the impact of the proposal for a European services e-card on the</p>	<p>The social identity cards mentioned are related to labour law issues which are not covered by the e-card proposal</p>

<p>sectoral social identity cards that have already been introduced at the initiative of the competent public authorities in the Member States or of the social partners;</p>	<p>(Article 2(2)(3) of the proposed Directive³ and Regulation⁴). They can continue to exist and are not affected by the e-card proposal.</p>
<p>14. The Committee of the Regions points out in this context that the issuing of A1 portable documents in connection with the posting of workers has already revealed potential pitfalls caused by the fact that it depends solely on the home Member State to validate the data concerning incoming service providers, in particular in the case of bogus self-employed workers. In this regard, the impact assessment accompanying the proposed amendment to Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers states: "The accuracy of the information contained in PD A1 documents cannot be guaranteed due to the lack of formal controls by the authorities in the sending countries, among other things".</p>	<p>Host Member States are free to ask questions and clarifications from the home Member State and the service provider at any time during the e-card procedure. Such questions will suspend the deadline until they have been resolved. Automatic issuance of the e-card (Articles 12(3) and 13(6) of the proposed Directive) will not take place when the deadline is suspended.</p> <p>In addition, ex-post checks, inspections and investigations initiated by competent authorities remain fully admissible to control service performance, as under current Union Law (recital 18 and Article 5(5) of the proposed Directive). If such controls reveal serious breaches of requirements applicable in a host Member State, this could lead to the suspension or revocation of the European services e-card (as per Articles 15-17 of the proposed Directive).</p> <p>The co-legislators could decide to further clarify these points in the proposal.</p>
<p>15. The Committee of the Regions points out that some features of the services e-card such as the "once only" principle for submitting information, its indefinite validity period, the obligation for the Member States to use the information contained in the services e-card without</p>	<p>The Commission would like to clarify a number of things.</p> <p>- <i>Unlimited validity</i></p> <p>There are clear obligations on the part of Member States and the service provider to keep information included in the e-card updated at all times</p>

³ COM(2016) 823 final

⁴ COM(2016) 824 final

the possibility of requesting proof of the validity of the information provided at a later stage, and restrictive revocation procedures that may require a final decision by the courts, are liable to significantly endanger monitoring of compliance with national laws and the enforcement of workers' rights and consumers' rights;

16. The Committee of the Regions notes that the European services e-card is supposed to include information on insurance coverage. However, the unlimited validity of the card suggests that this information will only need to be submitted once, which risks making inspections and checks in the host Member States less effective;

(Article 17(4)(5) of the proposed Directive). This ensures the continued validity of the e-cards and the information contained therein.

Furthermore, Member States are free to carry out controls to check whether the information included in the e-card is still valid. They can decide when and how to do this, in line with Union law. The e-card system will in addition make it easier for authorities in home and host Member States to exchange information and ask each other questions. If necessary, Member States can suspend or revoke the e-card at any time.

Today certain controls are repeated on for example an annual basis, when the validity of prior controls expires. This can be burdensome for service providers (repetition of formalities) and even authorities (relying on difficult or even inexistent cooperation between Member States). In addition, such periodic controls do not always ensure a continuous validity of authorisations over time.

- Obligation for host Member State to accept information in an e-card

See reply on policy recommendation 14.

- Restrictive revocation procedures

The supervision mechanism introduced by the e-card (Art. 15-17 of the proposed Directive) relies on several sources of information and checks (authorities in both the home and host Member States as well as the service provider itself).

A competent authority can decide to trigger the suspension or revocation of

	<p>an e-card, in accordance with the national law in question and Articles 15 or 16 of the proposed Directive. In this case, an alert is immediately introduced in the e-card system and any authority accessing the database shall see it. Once the e-card holder has been given the opportunity to submit clarifications, if a decision is made by the competent authority to temporarily or permanently ban the provider from providing services, the e-card ceases to be valid (is suspended or revoked, respectively, by the issuing Member State) and service provision in the host Member State in question ceases to be legal.</p> <p>Furthermore, Article 18 of the Services Directive⁵ allows Member States, under exceptional circumstances and in particular cases relating to the safety of services, to derogate from the "freedom to provide services" clause in Article 16. In these situations, the e-card would be immediately suspended or revoked, as an emergency procedure.</p> <p>Finally, precautionary measures, with the nature of a sanction, preventing a service provider from legally providing services under the law of a Member State are included in the reasons to suspend or revoke under Article 15(1) of the proposed Directive.</p> <p>The co-legislators could decide to further clarify these points in the proposal.</p>
<p>20. The Committee of the Regions is critical of tacit approval in the event of</p>	<p>Host Member States have four weeks to assess e-card applications for</p>

⁵ Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market, OJ L 376, 27.12.2006.

<p>there being no response by the host Member State authority to a service provider's application for an e-card within the timeframes laid down; either such deemed validation should be deleted entirely or at least appropriate assessment and processing times should be chosen.</p>	<p>temporary cross-border provision and six weeks in the case of secondary establishment. In addition, host Member States are free to ask questions and clarifications from the home Member State and the service provider at any time during this period. Such questions will suspend the deadline until they have been resolved. Automatic issuance of the e-card (Articles 12(3) and 13(6) of the proposed Directive) will not take place when the deadline is suspended. These deadlines try to strike a good balance between giving enough time for host Member States to do controls and allowing service providers still a relatively swift procedure.</p>
<p>32. The Committee of the Regions would question whether the right balance is achieved between the benefits for service providers of introducing the services e-card and the resulting red tape for the Member State authorities concerned, including at local and regional level, considering also that a single point of contact is already available in every Member State for any questions and problems relating to the provision of cross-border services and that Member State authorities can exchange information through the Internal Market Information system. It regrets furthermore that the proposal does not clearly specify which administrative obligations on service providers will become superfluous for holders of an e-card. In view of the above, the Committee perceives a proportionality issue with the services e-card;</p>	<p>The benefits of the e-card proposal for service providers would be important. For example, it would offer them the following advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a single contact point in the home Member State; - the ability to communicate in their own language; - more transparency on applicable rules and information requirements in the host Member State; - more clarity on deadlines and clearly defined procedural steps. <p>Furthermore, the costs for Member States are expected to remain limited. The e-card relies on existing structures (the Internal Market Information system), in which the Commission will develop an electronic platform on which the e-card procedures run, made available to Member States free of charge. Member States will be required to appoint a coordinating authority, as a</p>

	<p>focal point for exchanges between Member States. However, the competent authorities under the e-card are already in place today for controlling incoming providers. These will even benefit from savings derived from using a streamlined interconnected e-platform available free of charge.</p>
<p>Notification procedure for improved notification of draft national laws on services</p>	
<p>36. The Committee of the Regions points out that the problems identified by the European Commission, such as failure to notify all measures, could also be avoided by improving the current notification system under the Services Directive. The added value of the new notification procedure, which imposes more restrictions on the national legislator, including at regional and local level, and is more complicated to implement, should be questioned in the light of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;</p>	<p>The improvement of the current notification procedure under the Services Directive, including through the issuing by the Commission of non-binding guidelines, has been assessed within the framework of the Impact Assessment. However, this option would not address the shortcomings which are inherent to the current procedure and which affect negatively the efficiency of the notification procedure. Furthermore the Commission already undertook actions with the Member States to improve the compliance with the notification obligation, with very limited results. These included guidance to Member States on how to meet the existing notification obligation as well as regular discussions on this obligation and exchanges of experiences and best practices with Member States' experts.</p>
<p>39. The Committee of the Regions calls for legislation with only local relevance to be exempted from the scope of the directive;</p>	<p>The obligation to notify laid down in the Services Directive applies to all requirements and authorisations schemes covered by that Directive, adopted at national, regional or local level.</p> <p>The Commission may facilitate the compliance by the local authorities</p>

	with the notification obligation by issuing guidance on practical aspects of the notification procedure.
Notification of parliamentary amendments	
<p>Amendment 1 – Recital (7)</p> <p>Amendments or modifications to draft measures introduced by legislative assemblies or national, regional and local parliaments during the parliamentary procedure should not be covered by the notification obligation laid down by this Directive. For the purposes of this Directive, the notification obligation should be considered to have been fulfilled when the draft measure is implemented and finally adopted at the end of the parliamentary procedure.</p> <p>Amendment 3 – Article 3(2)</p> <p>b) Member States shall not be obliged to notify the changes made during the parliamentary procedure to a draft measure that has been already notified. However, Member States shall notify the draft measure containing those changes to the Commission once it has been adopted.</p>	<p>Amendments to the notified draft measures introduced by national or local parliaments are covered by the notification obligation and shall comply with the Services Directive.</p> <p>Taking into account the necessity to preserve the sovereign right of parliaments to adopt legislation, the proposal, as modified by the Council in the General Approach, sets a derogatory procedure for the notification of parliamentary amendments that is also supported in the European Parliament Report on the Commission’s legislative proposal. Parliament and Council propose that parliamentary modifications would under certain conditions need to be notified only after their adoption.</p>
Consequences of the failure to comply with notification procedure	
<p>Amendment 2 – deletion of Recital (15)</p> <p>Amendment 4 – deletion of Article 3(4)</p> <p>The Committee of the Regions recommends the deletion of the provision establishing that the failure to comply with the notification obligation, notification deadlines and the obligation not to adopt the notified measures in case</p>	<p>Recital 15 and Article 3 (4) of the proposal are modelled on the case law developed by the Court of Justice of the European Union under the Directive (EU) 2015/1535⁶ (previously Directive 98/34), in particular in the Case C-194/94 CIA Security. According to that case law, in case a Member State failed to comply with</p>

⁶ Directive (EU) 2015/1535 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 September 2015 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on Information Society services, OJ L 241, 17.9.2015.

<p>an Alert is issued by the Commission, constitute a substantial procedural defect of a serious nature as regards its effects vis-à-vis individuals.</p>	<p>the notification procedure, the measure in question should be disregarded by national Courts in individual cases.</p> <p>The deletion of those provisions was proposed by the Council in the General Approach and is being discussed within the framework of the on-going legislative process.</p>
<p>Emergency procedure</p>	
<p>Amendment 5 - new article after article 3(8)</p> <p>The Committee of the Regions recommends to include a provision allowing Member States to adopt measures in case of urgent situation, without complying with the deadlines set for notification.</p>	<p>Commission assessments undertaken in preparation of the current legislative proposal did not show any evidence that would have justified the inclusion in the legislative proposal of an emergency procedure derogating from the general procedure.</p> <p>An emergency procedure has been proposed by the Council's General Approach and by the European Parliament and is being discussed within the framework of the on-going legislative process.</p>
<p>Consultation procedure</p>	
<p>40. the Committee of the Regions takes the view that the consultation should not prevent the Member States adopting the measure in question;</p> <p>Amendment 6 – Article 5(2)</p> <p>The consultation shall not prevent the notifying Member State from adopting the relevant provisions, which may, however, not be executed until the end of the consultation period.</p>	<p>The Commission considers that in order to achieve good cooperation and transparency between Member States and Commission and to allow the notifying Member State to take into account comments at an early stage, before the measure is adopted, it is necessary that Member States notify draft measures three months before their adoption and modifications one month before. Since the measures are notified sufficiently in advance, the decision-making process should not be delayed.</p>
<p>Alert procedure</p>	

<p>41. The Committee of the Regions is of the opinion that the Commission's Alert under Article 6(1) should set out in detail the reasons why it considers the draft measure in question to be incompatible with the Services Directive and any suggestions it may have for changes to the draft measure that would overcome its concerns; it suggests that the draft directive be amended to provide for this;</p> <p>42. The Committee of the Regions considers that, following the issuing of an Alert, the Commission should be required to engage in a dialogue with the relevant competent bodies, including at regional and local level;</p> <p><i>Amendment 7 – Article 6 Alert</i></p> <p>The Committee of the Regions recommends that Alert shall set out the reasons for the Commission's concerns; Commission shall engage in a dialogue with the relevant competent bodies including at regional and local levels. An alert issued by the Commission to a Member State shall not prevent that Member State from adopting the draft measure, which may, however, not be executed, until the closure of the consultation period.</p>	<p>The Commission would like to stress that the purpose of an Alert is to communicate to the notifying Member States the concerns about compliance of the notified measure with the Services Directive. The underlying idea is to have a dialogue with the Member State in order to avoid the adoption of a non-compliant measure and a subsequent infringement procedure. In order to preserve the smooth functioning of the whole system, the Commission will engage in a dialogue with the authority in the Member States coordinating the notification procedure and not with every single notifying authority.</p>
<p>Commissions' Decision powers</p>	
<p>43. The Committee of the Regions is concerned that the proposed Decision under Article 7 would unduly restrict the freedom of legislators at national, regional and local level; it considers that this should instead be a non-binding Recommendation that would not prevent national and regional lawmakers from completing the legislative process taking into account the Commission's</p>	<p>Article 15(7) of the Services Directive already empowers the Commission to adopt Decisions requesting Member States to refrain from adopting or to abolish new requirements of a kind listed in Article 15(2) of that Directive which are not compatible with Union law. In the Commission's proposal that power should apply to all measures covered by the notification obligation.</p>

<p>Recommendation; it notes that the Commission is empowered to challenge the legality of enacted legislation in the European Court of Justice and this represents an important potential sanction which national and regional lawmakers, who had received an alert notification/Recommendation regarding incompatibility from the Commission, would surely take into account;</p> <p>44. The Committee of the Regions considers that the clarifications that the draft directive provides in relation to the scope of the measures to be notified and the information to be submitted, together with enhanced consultation, an alert mechanism and provision for a Commission Recommendation regarding incompatibility, should be sufficient to provide an improved notification procedure that is effective while respecting the prerogatives of national and regional legislators;</p> <p>Amendment 8 - Article 7 <i>Recommendation:</i></p> <p>The Committee of the Region recommends replacing the Commission's power to adopt Decisions by non-binding Recommendations and information of the notifying Member States of the Commission's intention, should the measure be adopted, to bring an action before the Court of Justice of the European Union.</p>	<p>Circumscribed and limited power to adopt decisions on the compatibility of national measures with the Union law respects the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. It takes into consideration the necessity of an effective notification procedure, while at the same time respecting the decision-making process at Member State level. It should be stressed that the Commission can adopt such decision only after the consultation period, during which the parliamentary procedure is not suspended and the Commission, other Member States and stakeholders have the possibility to comment on the notified measure. The Commission's decision power is without prejudice to its competence to initiate an infringement procedure established by Art 258 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.</p>
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N°4 Reform of European Union own resources within the next Multiannual Financial Framework post-2020 (own-initiative opinion)

CoR 2017/01530 – COTER-VI/026

125th Plenary Session – October 2017

Rapporteur – Ms Isabelle BOUDINEAU (FR/PES)

DG BUDG – Commissioner OETTINGER

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>7. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the publication of the Commission's reflection paper on the future of European Union finances, particularly the section on "Revenues to support European Union policies". The Committee of the Regions endorses the reference in the letter of intent sent by the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on 13 September 2017, regarding the intended reform of the own resources system. However, the Committee of the Regions would like to see specific proposals presented alongside or in conjunction with the proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework (by May 2018).</p>	<p>The Commission would like to stress that the Reflection Paper on the Future of European Union Finances⁷ is part of the White Paper process aimed at catalysing a debate on the Future of the Union with 27 Member States.</p> <p>While the Reflection Paper identifies some key areas for potential reform, including on the revenue side of the European Union budget – own resources – this is with the intention to spark a broad debate and without prejudice to the legislative proposals that have been adopted as part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) package on 2 May 2018⁸.</p>
<p>6. The Committee of the Regions considers that this particular landscape, marked by the various crises, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, and the reflection process on the future of Europe, as well as the recommendations in the Monti report, provides an opportunity to create a vision of the priorities to be funded in the medium and long term in the framework</p>	<p>The Commission concurs that the proposals for a new Multiannual Financial Framework, including reforms on the revenue side constitutes an important building block for a forward-looking European Union in a post-2020 perspective. The Commission has presented its proposals for reform of the own resources system in the context of the</p>

⁷ COM(2017) 358 final.

⁸ COM(2018) 321 final; COM(2018) 322 final; COM(2018) 323 final; COM(2018) 324 final; COM(2018) 325 final; COM(2018) 326 final; COM(2018) 327 final; COM(2018) 328 final.

<p>of the European Union budget and to reform its current system of funding.</p>	<p>Multiannual Financial Framework package of 2 May 2018⁹.</p>
<p>9. The Committee of the Regions considers the current system to be sub-optimal, in particular because it is too dependent on national contributions. This approach tends to disregard the benefits of the single market and of certain European Union policies and place the focus solely on the rate of return. This approach also fails to take into account the cost of "non-Europe"; therefore calls for all of the correction mechanisms and rebates to be abolished.</p>	<p>The Commission has taken good note of the recommendations of the High Level Group on Own Resources (HLGOR) which evoke this line of argument.</p> <p>The notion of European Added Value has been pivotal in the preparations of the Multiannual Financial Framework package including the future expenditure programmes.</p> <p>In its proposal of 2 May 2018, the Commission proposed to eliminate all corrections on the revenue side as part of a fair and balanced budget package.</p>
<p>14. The Committee of the Regions feels that the aim of this reform should be to create a clearer, more provident and balanced budget that responds to European challenges and is based on a larger proportion of new own resources and a reduction in national contributions, while seeking to minimise additional burdens on taxpayers.</p>	<p>The Commission emphasises the potential merits of the European Union budget in generating budgetary synergies but also acknowledges that it will be challenging to maintain overall 'fiscal neutrality' against a background of the need for resources whilst simultaneously catering for new political priorities and the withdrawal of an important net contributor to the European Union budget.</p>
<p>17. The Committee of the Regions believes that creating a link between taxes levied and specific priority European Union policies would have an educational value, which would lead to increased acceptability. The Committee of the Regions recommends maintaining the principle of the universality of the European Union budget.</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that the principle of universality is a matter of sound financial management but that – at the same time - a better conceptual link between revenue and expenditure policies might be constructive in tackling visibility and legitimacy challenges.</p>

⁹ COM(2018) 325 final.

<p>N°5 Future of Connecting Europe Facility Transport (own-initiative opinion) CoR 2017/01531 – COTER-VI/027 125rd Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Mr Ximo PUIG I FERRER (ES/PES) DG MOVE – Commissioner BULC</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>2. The Committee of the Regions recognises that the Connecting Europe Facility, which was adopted in 2013 as a common legal framework and a funding instrument for the transport sector, is a cornerstone in the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and, therefore, in the overall progress made towards establishing a firmer European Union vision. The Connecting Europe Facility is designed as an essential co-financing instrument for setting up and completing Trans-European Transport Network infrastructure and services. It must therefore be coupled with social well-being, cohesion, job creation¹⁰, economic growth and environmental sustainability¹¹, which is why the costs incurred by a Europe without the Trans-European Transport Network and the Connecting Europe Facility would be greater than the funding that is currently allocated to them¹²;</p>	<p>The Commission recalls that the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) primarily aims at the completion of the Trans-European Networks in Transport, Energy and Telecommunication by supporting actions that would otherwise not be realised in a sufficient or timely manner based on national or market resources. It provides a positive impact as regards social well-being, cohesion, job creation, economic growth and environmental sustainability.</p> <p>The Commission presented a full Report on the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Connecting Europe Facility in February 2018.</p>
<p>12. The Committee of the Regions stresses that funding from the Connecting Europe</p>	<p>The Commission would like to clarify that the instruments have a distinct</p>

¹⁰ TEN- Corridors: *Forerunners of a forward-looking European Transport System* (2016), by P. Balázs, P. Cox, C. Trautmann, P. Wojciechowski, L. Brinkhorst, M. Grosch, and K. Peijs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/116220/tent-issues-papers.pdf>.

¹¹ *TEN- Corridors: Forerunners of a forward-looking European Transport System, 2016.*

¹² *The cost of non-completion of the TEN-T* (2016), Fraunhofer Institut für System und Innovationsforschung (ISI): <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/2015-06-fraunhofer-cost-of-non-completion-of-the-ten-t.pdf>.

<p>Facility and other related facilities should not compete with the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) or with its market-based approach, which aims to attract new funds and to mobilise inactive capital. Consequently, it considers the European Fund for Strategic Investments and the Connecting Europe Facility to have different objectives and believes therefore that they should not be considered as interchangeable. However, in cases where there may be synergies between the two funds, an optimal mix of these resources should be sought in order to stimulate investment in the European Union.</p>	<p>nature and address specific investment needs. To promote the synergies between the instruments, the Connecting Europe Facility Blending call, combining Connecting Europe Facility grant with private finance including the European Fund for Strategic Investments, was launched in order to further align Connecting Europe Facility and European Fund for Strategic Investments initiatives. Looking forward, the Commission is reflecting on options for greater synergies to promote the most effective way to address the investment needs in transport connectivity.</p>
<p>15. The Committee of the Regions considers that, given the need to increase the activity of the cohesion countries, and in order to maintain complementarity between the Connecting Europe Facility and the Cohesion Fund, the budget allocation for the cohesion countries should be maintained;</p>	<p>The Commission would like to point out that for the first time, a share of the cohesion budget (EUR 11.3 billion - transport) was executed under direct management within the Connecting Europe Facility framework. This has proved very successful as 100% of the envelope was allocated during the first half of the programme period, almost exclusively on sustainable transport modes. Building on the momentum, the Commission is reflecting, within the scope of the Connecting Europe Facility Impact Assessment under preparation, on possible ways to enhance synergies in order to further leverage the Cohesion Fund.</p>
<p>16. The Committee of the Regions calls on the European Commission to make a determined effort to improve the selection, project management, governance and monitoring of the activities linked to the Connecting Europe Facility [...]</p>	<p>The Commission would like to stress that the direct management of the Connecting Europe Facility grants has proved very efficient, with a strong project pipeline and a competitive selection process, focus on European Union policy objectives, coordinated implementation and the full</p>

	involvement of Member States, and support from the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA).
17. The Committee of the Regions considers that financing the Trans-European Transport Network by means of an instrument shared with energy and telecommunications is artificial. Transport policy has been laid out clearly, and so the Committee of the Regions recommends that it have its own instruments;	The Commission considers that keeping the three sectors together seems appropriate in light of their common goals and challenges, and the Commission is reflecting on possible ways to make synergies easier in the next Multiannual Financial Framework.
19. The Committee of the Regions considers that while the Connecting Europe Facility financing of transport projects must primarily be based on subsidies, loans, guarantees or own funds could also be suitable;	The Commission would like to recall also the option of a blending approach, combining grants with private capital. This approach has been piloted by the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport during the launch of the first Connecting Europe Facility Blending call in 2017.
23. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to decentralise project selection, management, monitoring and supervision procedures, by involving the regions to a greater extent in the Connecting Europe Facility, with the following measures: abolishing the need for the state's final approval when signing projects (in favour of a criterion that is based more on subsidiarity), thus enabling the regions to sign the projects; as a result, including local and regional authorities among the parties authorised under Article 9 of Regulation 1316/2013, authorising them to present and agree on the submission of proposals;	The Commission will assess the implementation of Article 9 of the current Connecting Europe Facility Regulation ¹³ in the context of the preparation of the future instrument. It should be noted that Connecting Europe Facility grant submissions are subject to Member State approval and the approval subject to Comitology, which ensures that Member States are committed to the implementation of the projects, which is key to getting the European Union value-added and benefits for the Trans-European Transport Network.

¹³ Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, *OJ L 348*, 20.12.2013.

[...]

Including the regions in defining and drafting work programmes, in the run up to the call for tenders.

<p>N°6 A European strategy on Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems COM(2016) 766 final – CoR 2017/02552 – COTER-VI/028 125th Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Mr Bouke ARENDS (NL/PES) DG MOVE – Commissioner BULC</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>The Committee of the Regions wishes the European Union to play a coordinating role in the development of an interoperable system as regards the standards and rules for transport communication systems and technologies;</p>	<p>Interoperability is one of the fundamental principles of the Intelligent Transport Systems Directive¹⁴. To ensure the standards and rules for transport communication systems and technologies contribute to interoperability, the Commission is preparing a new Delegated Act¹⁵ under the Intelligent Transport System Directive on Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems (C-ITS)¹⁶.</p> <p>The Commission is also acting as a catalyst in promoting research and policy developments, and last year 27 Member States, Norway and Switzerland signed a Letter of Intent¹⁷ supporting cooperation on cross-border sections, on which to conduct research, tests and large-scale demonstrations on road safety, data access, interoperability and liability.</p>
<p>9. The Committee of the Regions calls</p>	<p>The Commission is well aware of the</p>

¹⁴ Directive 2010/40/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other modes of transport, *OJ L 207*, 6.8.2010.

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-2592333_en

¹⁶ COM/2016/0766 final.

¹⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eu-and-eea-member-states-sign-cross-border-experiments-cooperative-connected-and-automated>

<p>for specific measures and funding for deploying Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems outside of the Trans-European Transport Network;</p> <p>11. The Committee of the Regions points to the fact that these hubs are primarily located in urban regions and cities where multimodal transport can make the largest contribution to reducing the negative impact of traffic and transport, such as congestion, air pollution, parking problems and low levels of road safety. Cycling is also part of multimodal transport and is also primarily local and regional in nature;</p>	<p>importance of cities and urban regions in the deployment of Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems. During the cost-benefit analysis performed during the first phase of the Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems platform, it was concluded that up to 50% of all benefits of Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems are realised in urban environments. As such, several existing and still ongoing research and pilot deployment projects focus on urban environments. Some of the projects funded by the Connecting Europe Facility for (pre-) deployment activities also cover the so-called urban nodes.</p>
<p>12. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to take steps to remove barriers to introducing Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems in urban regions and cities;</p>	<p>In the list of mature Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems services (the so-called Day 1 services), many specifically target the urban environment. In the second phase of the Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems platform, a dedicated Urban Working Group further developed the needs of cities and the potential benefits they could generate by deploying the Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems, including the further extrapolation towards more advanced and automated Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems.</p>
<p>24. The Committee of the Regions asks the Commission to also develop scenarios and measures to prepare for the longer-term development towards fully automated transport which will bring greatest economic and social benefit in the future.</p>	<p>The Commission considers research and innovation as essential for deployment of an increasingly automated transport system. The research and innovation framework programme Horizon 2020 is supporting this ambition, and since 2016, there are dedicated calls for automated road transport and under the Information and Communication Technologies</p>

	<p>Programme.</p> <p>The Commission has recently taken up discussions in the Intelligent Transport Systems Committee for the longer-term development towards highly automated transport. The focus in this discussion is on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying the (road automation) use cases expected to generate the greatest economic and social benefit in the future; - listing the enablers for these use cases and the blocking issues on which increased cross-border cooperation is required; - expressing ambition levels on cross-border cooperation to address these issues.
<p>44. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to stimulate international cooperation between local and regional authorities in different countries in order to connect local and regional projects, tests and experiments as far as possible, and to share knowledge;</p>	<p>The Commission is well aware about the broad range of activities going on in different countries and regions. Several initiatives have been launched to ensure knowledge and experience sharing across borders, and further activities are being developed, including discussions in the Intelligent Transport Systems Committee mentioned above.</p> <p>International cooperation has started with the USA and Japan, as well as Singapore.</p>
<p>45. The Committee of the Regions calls for a detailed approach to be developed and put forward (e.g. similar to the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking, in which businesses and actively participating local and regional authorities cooperate with each other, with support from the Commission).</p>	<p>Consensus is growing amongst stakeholders that a public private partnership in this domain would accelerate development. The Commission is currently considering the best options for supporting such partnerships, having in mind other successful experiences in the transport sector and the desire for strong public</p>

	participation at all levels.
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<p>N°7 Environmental Implementation Review CoR 2017/00836 – ENVE-VI/021 125th Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Mr Andrew VARAH COOPER (UK/EA) DG ENV – Commissioner VELLA</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>4. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission and Member States to make the best use of the Environmental Implementation Review to support that environmental considerations are taken into account in the macro-economic priorities of the European Semester process, and to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.</p>	<p>The Environmental Implementation Review country reports already link each thematic chapter to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Monitoring of progress on the observed implementation gaps will contribute to assessing delivery of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
<p>6. The Committee of the Regions recommends that the Commission be more incisive in the Environmental Implementation Review analysis and increase comparability between Member States.</p>	<p>The data used in the Environmental Implementation Review country reports are comparable, and the Commission included there, where appropriate, rankings and scoreboards allowing comparison of Member States within each policy area. However, the main goal of the Environmental Implementation Review is cooperation, dialogue and search for solutions that work at national level. Relying on a name and shame exercise could jeopardise this goal. The Commission will consider the inclusion of more</p>

	<p>overviews of a scoreboard type in the next Environmental Implementation Review reports in order to improve transparency.</p>
<p>8. The Committee of the Regions considers that, where possible and appropriate, the Environmental Implementation Review process should tie in with existing evaluation mechanisms that also relate to the implementation of European legislation, such as the Make It Work project, the activities of the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, and the Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) programme.</p>	<p>The Commission will make sure that the Environmental Implementation Review is coordinated with the other relevant initiatives, including those mentioned. In particular, the Commission highly appreciates the work under the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) Review Initiative and seeks to facilitate it also through financial support, as in the past.</p>
<p>11. The Committee of the Regions offers the Commission close and structured cooperation for the whole Environmental Implementation Review cycle, including activities by the Joint Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment, focusing on the different structural implementation challenges for local and regional authorities and solutions to them, as highlighted in section D of the opinion. This also includes exploring means for the Committee of the Regions to contribute to substantiating the Environmental Implementation Review country specific reports and guidance for Member States by providing a territorial dimension, taking account of the experience the Committee of the Regions has gained from its contributions to the Europe 2020 governance cycle through the regular assessment of the European Semester from a local/regional perspective.</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the offer to continue working closely with the Committee of the Regions on the Environmental Implementation Review (including through the Technical Platform), particularly because most implementation in the Member States is the task of regions and municipalities, and would appreciate to discuss with the Committee possible initiatives to exploit the Environmental Implementation Review 2017 Country Reports and to the preparation of the second Environmental Implementation Review package. The use of the peer-to-peer tool to support exchange of good practice in better implementation at local and regional level could be an important topic in this respect.</p>
<p>16. The Committee of the Regions</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the idea, as</p>

<p>suggests exploring the possibility of organising issue-specific meetings in close cooperation with local and regional authorities and the Commission's and the European Parliament's national representations in different parts of the European Union territory; such events would serve to discuss specific local implementation challenges and could thus contribute to the country reports.</p>	<p>it could strengthen the involvement of regions and local authorities in the Environmental Implementation Review. It is explicitly envisaged that cities and regions participate in the peer-to-peer tool as these levels of governance are often directly confronted with the practical implantation of the environmental acquis.</p>
<p>18. The Committee of the Regions urges the Commission to make climate change an important element of the next round of the Environmental Implementation Review and to include climate change mitigation and adaptation whilst ensuring compatibility with the provisions of the energy union governance;</p> <p>19. The Committee of the Regions stresses the need to incorporate the implementation of the Industrial Emissions Directive into the next round of the Review. In this respect, the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law should have a more prominent role in the process in order to support the collection of good practices for 2019;</p> <p>20. The Committee also recommends integrating European Union policy on chemicals, which is a cornerstone of European Union environmental policy. The Environmental Implementation Review should highlight shortcomings and positive experiences with respect to the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals.</p>	<p>The Commission is taking steps to ensure that the second review cycle will be even more comprehensive, by including chemicals, industrial emissions and consider climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Commission will ensure consistency with relevant European Union policies and initiatives, including with provisions of the governance of the Energy Union.</p> <p>The Commission appreciates the work done by European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law on permitting and inspections concerning the Industrial Emissions Directive¹⁸ and is ready to support an enhanced role of the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law in the Environmental Implementation Review process.</p>
<p>23. The Committee of the Regions</p>	<p>Ineffective multi-level coordination is</p>

¹⁸ Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control), *OJ L 334, 17.12.2010*.

<p>recommends that the Environmental Implementation Reviews focus on ineffective coordination between local, regional and national authorities, in order to address: unclear divisions of competencies and responsibilities, a lack of administrative capacity, insufficient financing and use of market based instruments, a lack of policy integration and policy coherence, a lack of knowledge and data and insufficient compliance assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>indeed one of the root causes of weak environmental implementation as identified in the Environmental Implementation Review. This requires active participation of authorities at all levels and bringing in the experience of the Committee of the Regions. Some of these could also be explored in pilot projects with the help of the Committee of the Regions, with a view to rolling out potential solutions.</p> <p>On 18 January 2018, the European Commission adopted a 9-point Action Plan to increase compliance with and improve governance on European Union environmental rules on activities¹⁹. The actions aim at strengthening national environmental compliance assurance systems and will be implemented over 2018-2019 with the help of European Union countries and European networks of environmental agencies, inspectors, police, prosecutors and judges.</p>
<p>24. The Committee of the Regions urges the European Commission to develop a common methodology for the national Environmental Implementation Review dialogues and provide guidelines to ensure the full participation of local and regional authorities throughout the process.</p>	<p>The Commission stimulates Member States to organise national dialogues on their Environmental Implementation Review reports using a cross-sectoral approach. The first country dialogues in 2017 have succeeded in doing so. Other common principles for national Environmental Implementation Review dialogues which the Commission has suggested are political involvement, involvement of regional and local authorities, broad stakeholder involvement and inviting other Member States to participate as observers (peers). No further guidelines are deemed necessary, instead the</p>

¹⁹ COM(2018) 10 final.

	national authorities should be further encouraged to organize such debates.
26. The Committee of the Regions asks Member States to facilitate the establishment of Local and Regional Environmental Implementation Reviews corresponding to the national reviews.	This is an interesting idea that might be useful especially in large Member States; its feasibility will be discussed in the context of the Semester/ Environmental Implementation Review Expert Group.
36. The Committee of the Regions urges the Commission to allocate a sufficient budget to the new Environmental Implementation Review peer-to-peer tool. The Commission should also ensure its complementarity with the peer-to-peer activities carried out by the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law, and with the exchange of environmental issues by managing authorities under the TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER tool.	The budget for the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange - Environmental Implementation Review (TAIEX-EIR) peer-to-peer tool which was launched on 7 September 2017 is based on the experiences of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (REGIO peer-to-peer tool), and should be sufficient to meet the demands. Complementarity with the activities of the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law has been ensured.
45. The Committee of the Regions requests that the Commission work with relevant national authorities, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Union Covenant of Mayors, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and ICLEI to develop the concept and methodologies for introducing Local and Regionally Determined Contributions, thereby contributing towards Climate Change targets agreed under the 21st Conference of the Parties to the Paris Climate Agreement. Pathfinding local and regional authorities would initially be involved on a voluntary "proof of concept" basis.	The Commission is already promoting multilevel governance and increased coordination between national, regional and local climate action, including thorough the Covenant of Mayors. Covenant cities commit to develop climate and energy action plans and targets that strive to be at least as ambitious as their countries' Nationally Determined Contribution, and to implement adaptation action. In the European Union, Covenant cities commit to meeting or exceeding European Union's 40% emission reduction target by 2030. National and territorial Covenant coordinators have an important role to play in enhancing synergies. The common approach for city and local governments to report greenhouse gas emissions inventories,

	<p>announced during the Climate Summit for Local and Regional Leaders in Bonn in 2017, will help to transparently track the contributions of cities and local governments within the framework of the Paris Agreement.</p>
<p>62. The Committee of the Regions urges the Commission and Member States to continue to strengthen the role of the Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) and further develop national IMPEL networks that engage experts from regional and local authorities in sharing best practices.</p>	<p>The Commission intends to further improve its close cooperation with the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) as well as with other practitioner networks, as a part of the adopted initiative on Environmental Compliance assurance referred to at several occasions in this Committee of the Regions opinion (points 9, 12, 55-62).</p>

N°8 Climate finance: an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement (own-initiative opinion)
CoR 2017/02108 – ENVE-VI/024
125th Plenary Session – October 2017
Rapporteur – Mr Marco DUS (IT/PES)
DG CLIMA – Commissioner ARIAS CAÑETE

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>4. The Committee of the Regions stresses that enormous investment is necessary to deal with the challenges of climate change and that this cannot be covered by local and regional resources, or even with public resources alone. That is why the Committee of the Regions welcomes international, European and national initiatives aimed at mobilising private investment;</p>	<p>The Commission recognises the importance of the private sector as a key source of finance for climate mitigation and adaptation actions. The establishment of a robust enabling policy environment can significantly mobilise private sector finance. It is also important to continue scaling up the availability of capital for low-emissions, climate-resilient and sustainable investment, enhance the ability of the financial system to mobilise finance, and adequately manage respective financial risks. In this context, the European Union will continue to develop and improve a broad set of instruments to mobilise private sector finance for international climate action.</p>
<p>10. The Committee of the Regions recognises that part of the solution lies in operating the global financial markets more efficiently. For this reason, the Committee of the Regions considers it a priority to raise investor awareness of the risks and opportunities linked to climate change – so that they are able to move</p>	<p>Available information suggests that approximately 2.000 European Union companies disclose relevant environmental and social information. The Directive on disclosure of non-financial information²⁰ will require by the end of 2018 relevant disclosures from large public-interest companies</p>

²⁰ Directive 2014/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 amending Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large undertakings and groups, *OJ L 330, 15.11.2014*.

<p>towards more sustainable investments – and welcomes the final recommendations by the Financial Stability Board's Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures.</p>	<p>with more than 500 employees, raising the number of transparent companies to approximately 6.000.</p> <p>In June 2017, the Commission published its guidelines²¹ to help companies disclose environmental and social information. These guidelines are not mandatory and companies may decide to use international, European or national guidelines according to their own characteristics or business environment.</p>
<p>12. The Committee of the Regions recognises that the European Union has launched various laudable initiatives in the area of climate finance (...). While welcoming all these very positive initiatives, the Committee of the Regions recommends avoiding any overlaps and paying full attention to coordination between all policies and initiatives at European level;</p> <p>Paragraphs 13-17 contain more detailed Committee of the Regions' suggestions for action.</p>	<p>The Commission is committed to continually improving the policy making process, including in the area of climate finance, through its Better Regulation Agenda²². This includes several key improvements such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthening preparation of initiatives via expected and actual impact assessment at every stage of the decision-making process and extensive planning and analysis carried out before taking action, - improving consultation via increasing opportunities to contribute throughout the policy and law-making cycle, - making sure European Union laws are fit for purpose and aligned with the climate objectives, - ensuring quality via the Regulatory Scrutiny Board, an independent group of Commission officials and experts from outside the Commission, - increasing cooperation between European Union institutions.

²¹ C/2017/4234.

²² COM(2017) 651 final.

<p>21. The Committee of the Regions calls on the European Commission to improve the share of the budget earmarked for climate and environmental sustainability measures under its development aid programmes for third countries, in line with the European Parliament's recently approved regulation establishing the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), which set a climate investment target of 28% of the total budget.</p>	<p>The Commission has established climate action as a key priority. To respond to challenges and investment needs related to climate change, the European Union has agreed that at least 20% of its budget for 2014-2020 – as much as EUR 180 billion – should be spent on climate change-related action. In particular, the European Union's development policy will contribute with an estimated EUR 14 billion over the years 2014-2020 for climate spending in developing countries.</p> <p>All relevant European Union spending programmes shall contribute to the achievement of the 20% goal to the extent possible. The Commission closely tracks the contribution of each programme in order to inform on the actual levels achieved and, if needed, on the needed action to be taken.</p> <p>Furthermore, for the long-term budget for 2021-2027 the Commission has proposed that 25% of Union expenditure contributes to climate objectives – an amount of EUR 320 billion²³.</p>
<p>26. The Committee of the Regions suggests that the national plans on climate and energy include medium-term climate investment plans covering the main measures planned, listed according to the relevant level (national or sub-national) and the type of support needed to fill any funding gaps, and also assessing for this purpose the use of innovative financial instruments;</p>	<p>In November 2016 the Commission presented a legislative proposal for a reliable and transparent Governance of the Energy Union to help the European Union meet its climate and energy policy goals until 2030 and beyond²⁴. It sets out inter alia the requirements for integrated national energy and climate plans and a streamlined and inclusive process to establish them. Stable national energy and climate plans up to</p>

²³ COM(2018) 321 final.

²⁴ COM(2016) 759 final.

	<p>2030 will provide regulatory stability for investment certainty and transparency on national efforts which is imperative in view of the considerable investment needs in the energy sector over the next decades.</p>
<p>29. The Committee of the Regions emphasises, furthermore, that creating new instruments such as green bonds and collective guarantees is important to facilitate financing. They can be developed by local and regional authorities, in cooperation with/supported by national and European institutions. There are many good current examples of this.</p>	<p>The Mid-Term Review of the Capital Markets Union Action Plan²⁵ assesses that financial markets are increasingly adept at differentiating between sustainable and other investments. In addition, the positive development of these markets should be supported through European Union-level measures to improve confidence in low-emissions climate-resilient projects' implementation, disclosures and labels, and provide appropriate regulatory recognition of any observed improvement of risk-return performance of these assets. These latter aspects were addressed in the Commission's Action Plan: financing sustainable growth²⁶.</p>

²⁵ COM(2017) 292 final.

²⁶ COM(2018) 97 final.

N°9 A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the European Union's External Action (own-initiative opinion)

JOIN(2017) 21 final – CoR 2017/03666 – CIVEX-VI/027

125th Plenary Session – October 2017

Rapporteur – Mr Marcin OCIEPA (PL/ECR)

DG NEAR – Commissioner HAHN

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>1. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the Commission's communication <i>A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the European Union's external action</i>²⁷, particularly the emphasis on local and regional authorities' important role as key players in building resilience in the European Union's neighbourhood on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The Committee of the Regions points out, however, that this emphasis on their role needs to be translated into tangible European Union and Member State policy actions, such as involving European Union partner countries' local and regional authorities, as well as their associations, in European Union external action, supporting capacity building for local and regional authorities in various policy areas, etc.</p>	<p>The Commission recognises the role of local and regional authorities in building resilience and supports their involvement in European Union actions and programmes aimed at building resilience in third countries.</p> <p>European Union local and regional authorities and their associations are regularly associated to initiatives led or funded by the European Union and aimed at supporting capacity building of local and regional authorities of partner countries.</p>
<p>2. The Committee of the Regions agrees with the definition of resilience set out in the document on the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), but calls on the Commission to recognise that local and regional authorities build resilient societies and are a cornerstone of stable democracy, enabling countries to become</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that local and regional authorities are key partners in building resilient, democratic societies.</p> <p>As indicated in the Joint Communication, "local governments (...) are often the basis on which resilience can take root and grow" and a particular attention is given to the</p>

²⁷ JOIN(2017) 21 final.

more resilient. The Committee of the Regions believes that the European Union's strategic approach should observe the bottom-up principle and should also assist and facilitate the exchange of good practices among European Union Member States' and neighbouring countries' local and regional authorities.

involvement of local governments "to build sustainable democratic states, accountable and transparent institutions (...) and participatory decision-making".

Through its financial support to partner countries, the Commission promotes the cooperation between regional, national and local levels and the capacity building of local and regional authorities. In accordance with the partnership principle, national and local authorities are involved in the preparation and implementation of programmes.

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) facilitates exchanges of best practices dedicated to local and regional level through coordination with central administration.

Several options for the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument funding schemes are currently under reflection in order to further develop and extend support at local and regional level.

The Commission also takes the territorial approach into account in programmes supporting autonomous and accountable local authorities, therefore strengthening democratic societies, and enhancing genuine local development through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

<p>4. The Committee of the Regions draws attention to the need to develop appropriate and effective financial and technical support instruments, with the greatest possible proportion of funding being used to provide practical support for building resilience, rather than to cover programme management costs.</p>	<p>The Commission recognises the importance of providing appropriate financial support for strengthening societal resilience. Key thematic priorities under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) as well as the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) include economic growth and development, good governance and the rule of law, migration, climate change, as well as the prevention and settlement of conflicts.</p> <p>The Commission also recognises the need to take into consideration the strategic approach to resilience in its current and future financing of European Union external action.</p>
<p>23. The Committee of the Regions recommends paying particular attention to cooperation between local and regional authorities on education, which is vitally important for building resilient societies. Urges the European Union institutions to support local and regional authorities in this area while upholding the principle of subsidiarity.</p>	<p>The Commission finds that incorporating resilience into national and local education plans is fundamental. Financial support provided under the Development Cooperation Instrument and the European Development Fund (EDF) to education in partner countries and education global initiatives, prioritises decentralisation as a necessary element to make national education systems more efficient and resilient.</p> <p>The Commission prioritises close cooperation with local and regional education authorities as well as longer term investment in their planning and implementation capacity. The Commission agrees that local ownership is conducive to developing innovative and resilience approaches, ensuring access to quality education, adapted to local needs.</p>

<p>24. The Committee of the Regions recommends that measures be taken to increase local communities' awareness of threats – particularly hybrid threats as well as threats related to energy security – and what local preparations can be made for them. These measures should be carried out in close cooperation with local academia and industry, the security services and local and regional authorities.</p>	<p>The Commission supports this recommendation. The European Union Action Plan on hybrid threats²⁸ includes conducting vulnerability assessments in our neighbourhood and identifying and delivering capacity building measures to mitigate the risks. Such an assessment has been conducted for Moldova, and has just started for Georgia, which are the first two pilot countries. Due consideration will be given to raise the awareness of local communities, and enhance their participation in risk reduction measures.</p>
<p>25. The Committee of the Regions emphasises the role of civil society as a key factor in building resilience. It draws particular attention to the support and collaboration of nongovernment organizations. Active citizenship and third-sector organisations make it possible to design and carry out modern, creative campaigns and methods in relation to education and humanitarian aid, and to develop socially-positive attitudes in partner countries, particularly those at high risk of hybrid threats.</p>	<p>The Commission recognises the role of civil society in building resilience, civil society often being, together with local governments, the basis on which resilience can take root at community level.</p> <p>For example, the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) promotes engagement with sub-national, national, and intra-regional civil society and supports specific civil society fora. This contributes to resilience in practice, with the European Neighbourhood Policy aiming towards long-term social, economic, and political transformation, which requires the building up of institutional capacities, working at different levels of civil society and with local and regional authorities as well as central government.</p> <p>The Commission promotes engagement with civil society in all third countries affected by crises, as indicated in the</p>

²⁸ JOIN/2016/018 final.

	<p>Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries (2013-2020)²⁹: "Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have, in particular, a fundamental role to play in fragile, crisis, and risk-prone situations, to safeguard vulnerable populations and communities, and as promoters and implementers of local resilience strategies".</p>
<p>27. The Committee of the Regions calls for greater cooperation with local and regional authorities on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Local and regional authorities are the level of governance that is closest to citizens – therefore in addition to knowing their local communities the best, they also play an important role as leaders and representatives of their communities.</p>	<p>The Commission concurs with the idea of a greater involvement of local and regional authorities in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. This is in line with the newly adopted European Union Integrated Approach to crisis and conflicts, which (as called for by the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy) recognises the need for European Union engagement with all players, from the international level down to the local level.</p>
<p>33. The Committee of the Regions concurs with the view that strategic communication is an effective tool in the fight against terrorism and extremism and in defence against cybercrime. The Committee considers it essential to move as quickly as possible to safeguard the European Union and partner countries from the effects of external disinformation campaigns that aim to discredit the political and social systems that underpin our identity, security and stability.</p>	<p>The Commission has been part of the European Union's joint efforts to improve strategic communication, to ensure better visibility of the results and benefits of European Union policies and to better explain and defend European Union values against alternative narratives and disinformation campaigns. To that end its services cooperates closely with the three European External Action Service Strategic Communications teams, and has taken a number of steps to increase the impact of its communication activities, including through the pooling of communication</p>

²⁹ SWD(2013)227 final.

	budgets.
<p>32. The Committee of the Regions agrees that building resilience is a multidimensional task. It considers that measures relating to the economy, society and education – measures that enable socially inclusive sustainable development – should take priority. Local and regional authorities play an incontrovertible role in these sectors. The Committee of the Regions notes that, in terms of geographical scope, partners from the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership should be the main focus. At the same time, the role and impact of countries in the Middle East and Central Asia on the European Union's resilience should be borne in mind.</p>	<p>The Commission supports the idea of resilience building as a multidimensional task, requiring actions to be conducted so as to ensure an inclusive and sustainable development in partner countries. Such actions may involve local and regional authorities, where relevant.</p> <p>This is the motivation for the 2015 review of the European Neighbourhood Policy, with its overarching objective of stability and ultimate aim of building a stable, democratic, and prosperous neighbourhood, thereby averting spill-over effects on the European Union of any instability affecting our neighbours.</p> <p>The Commission agrees that building resilience, as part of Sustainable Development Goals, is important in all parts of the world, the rest of the world also having an impact on the European Union, and is therefore an essential part of Union action.</p>

N°10 Building a European Data Economy
COM (2017) 9 final – CoR 2017/00853 – SEDEC-VI/025
125th Plenary Session – October 2017
Rapporteur – Mr Kieran McCARTHY (IE/EA)
DG CNECT – Commissioner GABRIEL

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>3. (also 13.) The Committee of the Regions asks the Commission to support local and regional authorities in their financing activities, by continuing to authorise priority deployment of the European structural and investment funds (ESIF) towards digital infrastructure such as data development and skills development in all European regions, and by recognising technological barriers to digital development projects in rural, mountainous, islands and sparsely-populated areas, which should be seen as services of general economic interest;</p>	<p>The joint Commission – Committee of the Regions broadband platform will provide information to the regions about broadband deployment investment possibilities, either using European Structural and Investment Funds or combined Financial Instruments.</p> <p>In addition the Commission has launched a Rural Development plan comprising of six actions aiming to promote the deployment of broadband infrastructure in rural areas using European structural and investment funds.</p> <p>The Broadband Competence Offices successfully launched in 2017, also act as an information source in the Member States and facilitating exchange of relevant information.</p>
<p>16. The Committee of the Regions calls for the European Union regulatory framework to stay fit for purpose in the digital environment to support innovation, and to exploit the full potential of the Single Market, and investment in the European Union economy;</p>	<p>The mid-term review of the Digital Single Market³⁰ takes stock of the implementation of the strategy. Some initiatives are under negotiation (updated European Union telecoms rules, free flow of non-personal data, cybersecurity, online platforms, Directive on the re-use of public sector information). These actions contribute</p>

³⁰ COM(2017) 228 final.

	to ensuring a regulatory framework that is fit for the development of the European Digital Single Market.
<p>30. (also 31.) The Committee of the Regions notes that within local and regional government and public service/infrastructure providers, advanced security training should be developed and implemented across organisations, but especially for those involved in the e-procurement, rollout and daily running of smart city technologies;</p>	<p>The European Innovation Partnership develops an initiative on urban platforms. This initiative is co-led by industry through a memorandum of understanding and by cities via a letter of intent. It aims at developing standards for smart cities initiatives based on cities' self-identified needs, including privacy and security by design.</p> <p>Trustworthiness and Security is one of the underlying principles of the European Union eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020.³¹ These are important pre-conditions for increasing trust in and take-up of digital services. The Commission welcomes and supports any initiative aimed at raising awareness within local and regional administrations.</p> <p>In its Communication on "Making the most of network and information systems – towards effective implementation of Directive (EU) 2016/1148 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union"³², the Commission recommended to Member States to transpose the Directive in such a way that its obligations also cover public administrations.</p>
<p>39. The Committee of the Regions calls for the legal uncertainties around raw machine-generated data and the lack of</p>	<p>As regards machine-generated data, the Commission continues to assess the need for action concerning the</p>

³¹ COM(2016) 179 final.

³² COM(2017) 476 final.

<p>intellectual property rights to be addressed. Advantage may be taken of gaps in the regulatory framework, or of the legal uncertainties described above, by imposing unfair standard contract terms on the users or through technical means, such as proprietary formats or encryption;</p>	<p>"emerging" data issues as identified in the January 2017 "Building A European Data Economy" Communication.³³ Resulting from a stakeholders' dialogue, the Commission adopted guidance³⁴ to encourage and facilitate private sector data sharing.</p>
<p>45. The Committee of the Regions considers that the Commission should take steps to make existing clouds or clouds under development at national, regional and possibly local level interconnectable and interoperable, exploiting the potential for standardisation. At the same time it emphasises the importance of implementing measures at local level to ensure the effectiveness of specifications for cloud applications;</p>	<p>The Commission³⁵ is working with industry and Member States to promote the use of existing relevant standards. Especially, in the context of the European Data Infrastructure, it will collaborate with the national and regional, scientific and public data centres, as well as develop and implement best practices, based on common European and global standards and specifications, to tackle the current lack of interoperability between national and disciplinary data centres.</p> <p>The Commission also supports the development and use of the information and communication technology standards needed to further improve the interoperability and portability of the cloud³⁶, and more in general supports the development of interoperability enablers (standards, data models, exchange platforms and tools) through the Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations, business and citizens programme (ISA²)³⁷.</p>

³³ COM(2017) 9 final.

³⁴ SWD(2018) 125.

³⁵ COM(2016) 178 final, COM(2016) 176 final.

³⁶ COM(2016) 176 final.

³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/home_en

	<p>The Commission's specific actions (e.g. devising and implementing financing instruments) are guided by these objectives.</p>
<p>46. The Committee of the Regions urges meaningful portability for non-personal data would also need to take into account broader data governance considerations involving transparency for users, managed access and interoperability to link different platforms together in ways that stimulate innovation;</p>	<p>One of the objectives of the Commission proposal for a Regulation on a framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union³⁸ is to make it easier for professional users of data storage and processing services to switch providers and port data to another provider or back to in-house information technology systems. The proposal envisages self-regulatory codes of conduct at European Union level that would focus on duly informing professional users about the applicable terms and conditions.</p> <p>With regard to portability of non-personal data for consumers upon termination of a contract for the supply of digital content, the Commission proposed³⁹ that the consumer is entitled to retrieve the content without significant inconvenience, in reasonable time and in a commonly used data format.</p> <p>The Commission made a proposal in April 2018 for a Regulation⁴⁰ on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services. The proposal requests further clarity on the conditions for data access and use in the trading relationship between online</p>

³⁸ COM(2017) 495 final.

³⁹ COM(2015) 634 final: Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on certain aspects concerning contracts for the online and other distance sales of goods.

⁴⁰ COM(2018) 238 final: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services.

	platforms and their business users. The Commission is also monitoring the emerging issues related to access and use of data in the online platforms economy under the Online Platforms Observatory ⁴¹ .
47. The Committee of the Regions calls for a strong coordinated approach to assessing data generation risks, especially those deemed detrimental to the development of the European Union data economy and the operation of cross-border data services and technologies in the internal market;	In order to address obstacles to the free movement of data storage or other processing services, the proposed Regulation on a framework for the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union ⁴² sets out a principle whereby location of data for storage or other processing within the Union shall not be restricted to the territory of a specific Member State, and storage or other processing in any other Member State shall not be prohibited or restricted, unless it is justified on grounds of public security.
50. The Committee of the Regions calls for an European Union Data Generation Systems Platform, similar to the emerging e-Government and Broadband platforms;	The joint Commission - Committee of the Regions Broadband Platform has been officially launched on 12 October 2017. The platform, consisting of representatives of the Committee of the Regions, Commission and the regions will provide a discussion and information forum for connectivity issues.
51. The Committee of the Regions concludes that greater acknowledgement should be given to the European Union's cities and regions in the sustainable roll-out of the Digital Agenda and the building of the European Union data economy.	Local and regional authorities as public actors have a key role to play in the data economy, both providing and reusing data. The different initiatives from the Data Package adopted on 25 April 2018 ⁴³ , including the recast of the

⁴¹ C(2018) 2393 final Commission Decision on setting up a group of experts for the Observatory on the Online Platform Economy.

⁴² COM(2017) 495 final.

⁴³ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-3364_en.htm

<p>Local and regional authorities are amongst the main target audience of the agenda's recommendations and must be seen as key drivers and partners for its implementation.</p>	<p>Directive on the re-use of public sector information, will contribute to further opening these, as this is an important source of data for innovative services and scientific research.</p>
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<p>N°11 The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe CoR 2017/03141 – SEDEC-VI/027 125th Plenary Session – October 2017 Rapporteur – Mr Mauro D'ATTIS (IT/EPP) DG EMPL – Commissioner THYSSEN</p>	
<p>Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential</p>	<p>European Commission position</p>
<p>Recommendations for amendments (pg. 3-12)</p>	<p>The proposed amendments to the text of the Pillar Proclamation are not considered here, since the text has been proclaimed jointly by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on 17 November 2017.</p>
<p>2. The Committee of the Regions regrets the European Commission's explicit statement that delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights is a shared commitment and responsibility between the European Union, its Member States and the social partners⁴⁴, which completely disregards local and regional authorities' responsibility and powers in this area;</p> <p>As well as other paragraphs (4, 6) related to the role of local and regional authorities.</p>	<p>The signatories of the interinstitutional Proclamation are the Member States, the European Parliament, and the Commission.</p> <p>The vision of the Commission is for local and regional authorities to play a key role in implementation, in accordance with Member States' competences and organisation.</p> <p>Economic, social and territorial cohesion are key and interlinked components of the European Union's growth strategy, embedded in the most recent Annual Growth Surveys. The Pillar aims to reinforce this further.</p>
<p>3. (and 16) The Committee of the Regions reiterates the importance of a strong European social agenda, in which competitiveness and social justice complement each other⁴⁵, in order to</p>	<p>The Commission maintains that upward social and economic convergence must go hand-in-hand, and that policies supporting growth and competitiveness on the one side, and</p>

⁴⁴ COM(2017) 251 final, Preamble (17).

⁴⁵ Committee of the Regions opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights (CDR 2868/2016).

<p>avoid all forms of social dumping and to ensure increased employment rates. The Committee of the Regions reminds to this effect the commitment in the preamble of the Treaty on European Union, "to promote economic and social progress for their peoples" and to ensure that "advances in economic integration are accompanied by parallel progress in other fields";</p>	<p>social policies on the other, can be mutually supportive, and actually complement each other. The Commission has also taken steps to address social dumping (for example, the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive⁴⁶).</p>
<p>9. The Committee of the Regions emphasises that the social pillar should contribute to reducing poverty, social exclusion and unemployment – particularly youth unemployment – and to tackling all possible forms of social inequality⁴⁷, including gender-based inequalities. This framework must include the European unemployment insurance scheme⁴⁸, as one of the first joint instruments for tackling employment crises;</p>	<p>Adequate and sustainable social protection is one of the three major headings of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Adequate unemployment benefits - of reasonable duration and as part of effective social protection systems - have been identified among the 20 principles. Frameworks for benchmarking the generosity and coverage of unemployment benefits and minimum income schemes, and related activation policies, are being developed jointly by the Commission and Member States in the framework of the European Semester.</p> <p>The European Union budget also plays a vital role to support the implementation of the Social Pillar. According to the Commission proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027⁴⁹, a strengthened European Social Fund, representing about 27% of cohesion expenditure, will provide targeted support to youth employment,</p>

⁴⁶ Directive 96/71/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services, *OJ L 18, 21.1.1997*.

⁴⁷ Committee of the Regions opinion on the European Pillar of Social Rights (CDR 2868/2016).

⁴⁸ Italian government proposal for European unemployment benefit.

⁴⁹ COM(2018) 321 final.

	<p>up- and re-skilling of workers, social inclusion and poverty reduction.</p> <p>Following the package on Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union of 6 December 2017⁵⁰, the Commission has also put forward a proposal for a European Investment Stabilisation Function to help maintain investment levels in the event of large asymmetric shocks when public finances become stretched. This tool is also meant to address employment crises.</p> <p>Furthermore, to ensure a full and sustainable implementation of the Youth Guarantee - and its roll out in the regions where most needed - the Commission proposed an extra EUR 2 billion to the Youth Employment Initiative to support 1 million more young people by 2020.</p>
<p>17. The Committee of the Regions highlights that any action taken – either public or private – must take account of regional and local specificities, demographic challenges and of persistently high youth unemployment. In relation to the latter point the Committee emphasises the importance of extending the benefits of the "Youth Guarantee" scheme to people up to the age of 30⁵¹ and of making the scheme a permanent feature of European employment policies, with sustainable and adequate funding from both European and national funds;</p>	<p>The principle on active support for employment (4c) extends the concept of the Youth Guarantee to all young people.</p> <p>The Youth Guarantee Recommendation offers Member States the flexibility to step up their ambition levels and extend the Youth Guarantee beyond the age of 25. Already 14 Member States have chosen to do so.</p>
<p>21, 35. (...)The Committee of the Regions further reiterates that, taking into</p>	<p>The 2016 Council Recommendation 'Upskilling Pathways'⁵³ gives effect to</p>

⁵⁰ COM(2017) 822 final.

⁵¹ Opinion on the Youth Employment Package, CDR 789/2013.

⁵³ Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484, 24.12.2016.

account national, regional and local circumstances and available resources, and bearing in mind that investment in human capital could be treated as a social investment, Member States should be supported in the implementation of the Skills Guarantee, aimed at improving employment opportunities and full participation in society for low-qualified adults in Europe⁵²;

the Commission proposal for a ‘Skills Guarantee’⁵⁴, which aims to help Europe's 64 million adults who do not yet have an upper secondary qualification or equivalent to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and progress towards an upper secondary qualification.

Member States are fully competent for the organisation and content of education and training systems, which includes teaching people to read, write and use digital media.

There are no additional European funds for the Upskilling Pathways initiative⁵⁵, but existing funds (European Social Fund, European Programme for Employment and Social Innovation, Erasmus+) can be deployed. Erasmus+ offers opportunities to equip adult education staff with the necessary tools for teaching or assessing basic skills for lower-qualified/skilled adults or to design tailored packages of learning. In addition measures such as recognition of flexible modes of learning and validation of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning also contribute to the goals of the Upskilling Pathways initiative.

The Commission proposal for the Erasmus programme post 2020⁵⁶ aims to give a strong boost to cooperation opportunities for organisations and institutions providing learning

⁵² Committee of the Regions opinion on A New Skills Agenda for Europe (COR-2016-04094).

⁵⁴ COM(2016) 382 final.

⁵⁵ Council Recommendation of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, OJ C 484, 24.12.2016.

⁵⁶ COM(2018) 367 final.

	<p>opportunities for adults. The Commission proposed to double the budget for the adults sector, with the aim i) to increase the outreach towards low-skilled people to improve competence-development and ii) to reinforce the development of basic skills and citizenship.</p> <p>The Commission also supports Member States in implementing the Recommendation by organising mutual learning, by funding preparatory activities, and by highlighting within the European Semester process Member States' performance in tackling the rate of low-skilled adults.</p>
<p>22. The Committee of the Regions points out that in order to have a balanced and regulated labour market, it is important to take account of changes in the nature of work (4.0), employment relationships and workers' protection, including the right to disconnect. To this end, calls for a permanent high level group to be set up by the Commission, the Council, the Parliament and the Committee of the Regions to develop a European reflection on the impact of digitalisation and new technologies and to promote the necessary economic and social policies, including when it comes to any local and regional measures that may prove appropriate;</p>	<p>Under the New Skills Agenda⁵⁷, the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition brings together Member States, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers, to take action to tackle the lack of digital skills and to accompany the digital transformation, by promoting the exchange of best practices.</p> <p>In addition, the Digital Education Action Plan⁵⁸, proposed by the Commission in January, outlines how the European Union can help people, educational institutions and education systems better adapt to life and work in an age of rapid digital change by making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning; developing the digital competences and skills needed for living and working in an age of digital transformation; and improving education through better</p>

⁵⁷ COM(2016) 381 final.

⁵⁸ COM(2018) 22 final.

	<p>data analysis and foresight.</p> <p>The Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed⁵⁹ aims at encouraging Member States to adapt their social protection systems to changing labour markets and in particular to extend coverage to people in new forms of work.</p> <p>On 20 December 2017, the Commission adopted a proposal for a new Directive for more Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions across the European Union, in order to improve working conditions across all types of employment relationships⁶⁰.</p> <p>As announced in the Communication on Artificial Intelligence⁶¹, the Commission is setting up a High Level Expert Group meant to analyse the impact of digitalisation on the labour market.</p>
<p>25. The Committee of the Regions calls for greater focus on integrating refugees, unaccompanied minors and legally resident migrants effectively, including through education and vocational training;</p>	<p>In 2016, under the Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, the Commission proposed guidelines and actions to support Member States in the integration of third country nationals, including refugees, in the areas of pre-departure/pre-arrival measures, education, employment and vocational training, access to basic services and active participation and social inclusion⁶².</p> <p>In recent years, the European Semester</p>

⁵⁹ COM(2018) 132 final.

⁶⁰ COM(2017) 797 final.

⁶¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-artificial-intelligence-europe>

⁶² COM(2016) 377 final.

	<p>has increasingly covered the integration of people with a migrant background, including refugees. In particular, analyses have focused on outcomes in the areas of employment, poverty and education.</p> <p>European Union funds (e.g. European Structural and Investment Funds, Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Employment and Social Innovation Programme) have been supporting labour market integration of third country nationals, including refugees.</p> <p>The principles and rights enshrined in the Pillar are addressed to European Union citizens and third country nationals legally residing in Member States (i.e. including refugees), regardless of their employment status, as well as to public authorities and social partners.</p>
<p>26. The Committee of the Regions asks for special attention to be paid to the legal acts affected by the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, such as freedom of movement for workers within the European Union, coordination of social security systems and European Union funds related to employment and social policies⁶³.</p>	<p>The Commission has set up a taskforce that specifically focuses on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.</p>
<p>30. The Committee of the Regions regrets that the pillar addresses housing only as an aspect of social services. It considers that appropriate and affordable housing for all is a prerequisite, which can lead to</p>	<p>The Pillar covers - for the first time at European Union level - the different aspects of the right to housing in a comprehensive manner.</p>

⁶³ European Parliament's EMPL Committee Working Party document – "around 670 pieces of Union law (including legislative acts, delegated acts and implementing acts) are currently in force in the areas of employment, freedom of movement for workers and social policy".

<p>greater social cohesion and help to build communities that are resistant to social, economic and geographic segregation;</p>	<p>While the Charter of Fundamental Rights provides the right to housing assistance and to a decent existence for all who lack sufficient resources, Principle 19a goes further by referring to the provision of housing support in-kind: namely social housing. Either social housing or housing assistance should be provided: the material scope of the Principle includes the whole range of possibilities in providing support in relation to housing, and covers, for example, housing benefit, income support, rental guarantees and tax deductions.</p>
<p>32. The Committee of the Regions is disappointed that the Pillar does not mention access to art and culture, which are key for social cohesion and tackling marginalisation and poverty⁶⁴.</p>	<p>The Pillar sets out the right to essential services and lists non-exhaustively some of the services which are of utmost importance in daily life. Member States retain competence in defining, organising, delivering and financing such services at national, regional or local level.</p>
<p>33. The Committee of the Regions strongly urges the European Commission and the Council to introduce incentive measures for countries that implement structural reforms geared towards achieving the Europe 2020 social objectives and combating social imbalances.</p>	<p>The Commission supports Member States' efforts to implement structural reforms in the framework of the European Semester. A number of Country-Specific Recommendations are addressed to Member States in the social policy field. Technical support is offered by the Commission to a number of countries, through its Structural Reform Support Service. A dedicated Structural Reform Support Programme is available as of 2017.</p>
<p>34. The Committee of the Regions underlines the fact that Europe's social progress can also be rolled out in a</p>	<p>A stronger focus on employment and social performance is particularly important to increase resilience and</p>

⁶⁴ European Alliance for Culture and the Arts.

<p>uniform manner to countries that are not members of the Euro⁶⁵ and therefore not initially beneficiaries of the social pillar. The Committee of the Regions invites the Commission and the Council to find suitable instruments for this purpose.</p>	<p>deepen the Economic and Monetary Union. For this reason, the European Pillar of Social Rights was initially conceived for the euro area but it is addressed to all Member States.</p>
<p>36. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to draw up a plan for a forward-looking social policy action programme containing specific measures.</p>	<p>The Pillar has been conceived as a reference framework to screen the employment and social performance of participating Member States, to drive reforms at national level and, more specifically, to serve as a guide for the renewed process of convergence towards better working and living conditions in Europe.</p> <p>Alongside, four specific measures were announced to incite policy action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An initiative on Work-Life Balance: to allow men and women to combine work with family life and caring obligations throughout the life cycle. 2. Consultation of social partners on a proposed revision of the Written Statement Directive: so that workers and employers, irrespective of the type of contract, have clarity on their contractual relationship. Following this consultation of social partners, the Commission presented a proposal for a Directive on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions on 21 December 2017⁶⁶. 3. Consultation of social partners on access to social protection: to ensure that everybody contributes to and is adequately covered by social protection. Following this consultation

⁶⁵ European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions.

⁶⁶ COM(2017) 797 final.

	<p>of social partners, the Commission presented a proposal for a Council Recommendation on Access to social protection for workers and the self-employed.⁶⁷</p> <p>4. An interpretative communication on the Working Time Directive⁶⁸.</p>
<p>38. The Committee of the Regions affirms that an appropriate set of tools should be introduced to measure and monitor the progress made⁶⁹ and calls for a Social Progress Protocol in any future Treaty change, aimed at putting social rights on a par with economic rights;</p>	<p>As part of the Social Fairness Package⁷⁰, the Commission outlines its views for the monitoring of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.</p> <p>It also recalls the legal framework for each of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights, with due regard to the respective competences of the European Union and of the Member States, including the role of the social partners and recent Union-level actions in each area.</p> <p>The Pillar is accompanied by a social scoreboard. The aim of the social scoreboard is to monitor developments in Member States on social and employment performance.</p> <p>The scoreboard is already being applied – since the 2018 Annual Growth Survey, published on 22 November 2017 – and will continue to be used in the framework of the yearly European Semester cycle.</p> <p>On 13 March 2018, the Commission has published a Communication on</p>

⁶⁷ COM(2018) 132 final.

⁶⁸ Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, *OJ L 299, 18.11.2003*.

⁶⁹ <http://www.esn-eu.org/news/925/index.html>

⁷⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/com-2018-131_en

Monitoring the Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights⁷¹. The Commission proposes, as a complement to initiatives already taken or initiatives to come, to strengthen the monitoring of implementation of the Pillar in the European Semester of policy coordination. They can be done, inter alia, by screening employment and social performances on the basis of the Social Scoreboard, thus supporting the broader process of upward convergence.

⁷¹ COM(2018) 130 final.

N°12 A European policy on the seismic requalification of buildings and infrastructure (own-initiative opinion)

CoR 2017/01036 – NAT-VI/020

125th Plenary Session – October 2017

Rapporteur – Mr Vito SANTARSIERO (IT/PES)

DG JRC – Commissioner NAVRACSICS

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>1. The Committee of the Regions notes that recent research on seismic risk in Europe (such as the SHARE project funded by the Seventh Research Framework Programme), while confirming that the highest levels of seismic risk concern countries such as Italy, Greece and Romania, also points to moderate levels for certain areas of countries such as France, Germany, Belgium, Spain and Portugal, including the risk from tsunamis;</p>	<p>The Seismic Hazard Harmonization in Europe (SHARE) project⁷² relates to the assessment of seismic hazard in Europe. Moderate levels of seismic hazard, while not causing considerable human casualties, may have a large economic impact, especially in highly developed areas with buildings and infrastructures built with no earthquake design considerations. The risk dimension needs to include exposure and vulnerability concerns that are not always easy to assess.</p> <p>Nineteen countries participating in the Union Civil Protection Mechanism included earthquakes in the 2015 National Risk Assessment (cf. Overview of Natural and Man-made Disaster Risks the European Union may face⁷³).</p>
<p>4. The Committee of the Regions notes that according to world-wide analysis of past seismic events, the number of victims and spread of damage is determined more by the vulnerability of buildings and lack of preparedness of the communities affected than by the</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that working on preventive measures, e.g. those that reduce the vulnerability of existing buildings and infrastructures, is the most effective way of reducing the consequences of an earthquake disaster, both in terms of economic</p>

⁷² www.share-eu.org

⁷³ SWD(2017) 176 final.

intensity of the earthquake;	costs and human losses.
<p>11. The Committee of the Regions considers that, in view of the large quantity of private and public buildings and infrastructure on which work may be required, uniform, Europe-wide criteria (including the Eurocodes) should be used for classifying the seismic vulnerability of buildings and infrastructure</p>	<p>The EN Eurocodes are a series of 10 European Standards, EN 1990 - EN 1999, providing a common approach for the design of buildings and other civil engineering works and construction products. While Eurocode 8 (EN 1998) addresses the "Design of structures for earthquake resistance", it does not specifically address the classification of the seismic vulnerability of buildings and infrastructure.</p> <p>The classification of the seismic vulnerability of buildings and infrastructure is highly important for carrying out any seismic risk analysis. Moreover, a harmonised methodology of classification is essential for carrying out comparative studies at European Union level, as well as for measuring the investments needed for seismic risk mitigation.</p> <p>Moreover, the classification of building can, in the same way as the energy performance classification of buildings, foster the involvement of the private sector in rewarding earthquake-resistant buildings and the investments made on mitigation measures.</p> <p>To this end, the Joint Research Centre can consult Member States stakeholders to promote the drafting of harmonised guidelines at European Union level for classifying the seismic vulnerability of buildings and infrastructure, using as vehicle the European Committee for Standardization Workshop Agreements (CWA).</p>
15. The Committee of the Regions	The Commission recognises that

<p>considers it essential, in order to optimise and properly target the technical and financial efforts aimed at reducing seismic risk to existing buildings, to promote awareness and analysis of the vulnerability of existing buildings as a starting point for further measures and major public-private initiatives. To do so, data collection campaigns should be encouraged for the purposes of statistical evaluation and outlining shared priorities and methodologies, along with regulatory change in the sector and financing and incentive measures;</p>	<p>addressing existing buildings, in particular residential buildings, is of paramount importance, as they are the most numerous and pose the highest risk to earthquake hazard.</p> <p>All actions aimed at reducing seismic risk and increasing resilience must count with a good representation of the exposure and knowledge of the existing building fabric and infrastructure, which in general is difficult to obtain and not available in a harmonised way.</p> <p>Efforts should be made in collecting relevant, harmonised data on buildings and infrastructure allowing for efficient, comparable seismic risk assessments. The data should be compliant with the INSPIRE Directive⁷⁴, in particular with the data specifications on Buildings.</p>
<p>16. The Committee of the Regions notes that the experience in several Member States - such as Italy - suggests little willingness to invest in work among older or second home owners; it would therefore seem worth introducing measures to inform such categories, together with incentives that are not limited to first homes. The Committee of the Regions acknowledges the need to adjust measures for analysing and upgrading existing buildings, not least on the basis of studies and practical experience of placing individual buildings in the context of a vulnerability assessment of the whole urban area or agglomeration, thereby recognising potential weaknesses in the actual</p>	<p>Mitigation measures cannot be addressed at the level of single buildings, but rather at the level of a building block, community or city level. For example, the earthquake disaster in Aquila (Italy) in 2009 resulted in the closure of the whole historical city centre, due to the high risk posed by highly damaged buildings on the use of a consistent number of other buildings that suffered no damage or had been retrofitted before the earthquake.</p>

⁷⁴ Directive 2007/2/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 2007 establishing an Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community, OJ L 108, 25.4.2007.

<p>conditions of use of the buildings;</p>	
<p>18. The Committee of the Regions notes that widespread requalification of public and private buildings is already under way in European countries in order to ensure greater energy efficiency, financed in part from European funds, but that such work does not generally address the issue of structural and earthquake safety</p>	<p>The Commission agrees that the requalification of buildings to ensure greater energy efficiency should also address aspects of structural and earthquake safety. This has the advantage of reducing costs by profiting from the economies of scale (i.e. one integrated intervention, rather than two, non-integrated interventions, distanced in time) and by ensuring that the investments on energy efficiency will endure thorough the entire – extended – service life of the building (i.e. minimisation of losses in future earthquake events).</p>
<p>22. The Committee of the Regions believes that seismic requalification measures must be regulated by a framework of European technical standards which also address the issue of seismic retrofitting of existing buildings, based on a holistic approach designed to ensure safety, robustness and durability;</p>	<p>In 2012 the Commission (Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises) issued the mandate M/466 EN to European Committee for Standardization (CEN) concerning the process of further evolution of the Structural Eurocodes aiming at the publication of the second generation of the Eurocodes.</p> <p>The standardization works started at the end of 2014 and cover, among others, the assessment, re-use and retrofitting of existing structures and the strengthening of the requirements for robustness.</p>
<p>23. The Committee of the Regions considers that an European Union platform should be set up to exchange knowledge, experience and best practice at different levels in the European Union countries;</p>	<p>The Commission has set up the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (DRMKC)⁷⁵ to provide a networked approach to the science-policy interface in Disaster Risk Management across the Commission,</p>

⁷⁵ <http://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/>

	<p>European Union Member States and the Disaster Risk Management community within and beyond the European Union. It provides better knowledge, stronger evidence and a greater focus on transformative processes and innovation to improve our understanding of disaster risk, to build resilience and risk-informed approaches to policy-making, and contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre has already organised a session on ‘Dealing with Earthquake’ during the Second Scientific Seminar (9-10 March 2017) and a workshop on ‘Seismic Risk Assessment Tools’ (11-12 May 2017), and addressed earthquakes in the trainings organised by the Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre Support System. A sub-chapter on earthquakes was included in the report ‘Science for disaster risk management 2017: Knowing better and losing less’.</p> <p>The Commission created the website “Eurocodes: Building the Future”⁷⁶ to foster awareness on the Eurocodes and disseminate material and information on training events. The Commission organised a workshop with worked examples on ‘Seismic design of buildings’ (10-11 February 2011) and a workshop on ‘Elaboration of maps for climatic and seismic actions for structural design in the Balkan region’ (27-28 October 2015), and published the report ‘Eurocode 8: Seismic design of buildings - Worked examples’.</p>
32. The Committee of the Regions	The Seismic Hazard Harmonization in

⁷⁶ <http://eurocodes.jrc.ec.europa.eu>

considers that maps of seismic hazard and risk zones for each country and/or region should be taken into account when implementing the proposals made in earlier points in order to optimise resources and results; proposes that research activities be fostered with the aim of developing these maps or updating them if they already exist;

Europe project, funded by the Seventh Research Framework Programme, aimed at providing a community-based seismic hazard model for the Euro-Mediterranean region with update mechanisms. The results from the Seismic Hazard Harmonization in Europe project can be used by code-makers and national authorities, aiming at harmonising the methodologies for the determination of seismic hazard across Member States.

The Horizon 2020 Seismology and Earthquake Engineering Research Infrastructure Alliance for Europe (SERA) project⁷⁷ will update and extend the European Seismic Hazard Model and develop a Risk Modelling Framework, which will require collection of harmonized exposure data.

Retrofitting related activities are not always possible or easy to handle. Work needs therefore also to be developed in parallel in the field of early warning systems and operational forecasting that can save human lives. This was addressed in a call in Horizon 2020 (SC5-17-2018 – Towards operational forecasting of earthquakes and early warning capacity for more resilient societies) which closed in February 2018. Concerning the mapping of risk zones, the Commission considers essential to work on harmonised methods for risk assessment, as well as on structured and harmonized methodologies for the collection of disasters damage and loss data.

⁷⁷ www.sera-eu.org

N°13 Protection of Children in migration (own-initiative opinion)
COM(2017) 211 final – CoR 2017/02782 – CIVEX-VI/025
125th Plenary Session – October 2017
Rapporteur – Ms Yoomi RENSTRÖM (SV/PES)
DG HOME – Commissioner AVRAMOPOULOS

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
<p>6. The Committee of the Regions highlights the link between the present opinion and other Committee opinions on proposals for reform of the asylum system that were adopted in 2016⁷⁸, and repeats its call for a comprehensive, sustainable European Union migration strategy based on solidarity and respect for human rights, including measures to provide effective protection for the most vulnerable migrants, namely children;</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the Committee of the Regions call for a comprehensive, sustainable European Union migration strategy based on solidarity and respect for human rights, including measures to provide effective protection for migrant children. The Commission fully shares this objective.</p> <p>Progress on the implementation of the Communication by Union and national actors is reviewed in the regular Progress reports on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration. The most recent report was adopted in mid-May 2018⁷⁹.</p>
<p>7. The Committee of the Regions considers the communication under discussion to be an important complementary contribution to the new Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and urges the European Union institutions involved in negotiations about the future asylum system to ensure that children's rights feature clearly in every aspect of it;</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes the support of the Committee of the Regions for the objectives of the Common European Asylum System reforms, and in particular the call to all institutions involved to reinforce the protection of migrant children.</p> <p>As indicated in the Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration of April 2017 (hereinafter <i>the Communication</i>),⁸⁰ the Commission's</p>

⁷⁸ COR-2016-05807-00-00-AC and COR-2016-03267-00-00-AC

⁷⁹ COM(2018) 301 final.

⁸⁰ COM(2017) 211 final.

	<p>proposals for the reform of Common European Asylum System seek to reinforce the specific safeguards applicable to children, in particular as regards the swift appointment of the guardian/representative.</p>
<p>8. The Committee of the Regions commends the Commission's proposals for specific key actions that highlight the responsibility of the European Union and its Member States for protecting children in migration. It is important to safeguard children's rights throughout the whole migration process;</p> <p>9. The Committee of the Regions welcomes the Commission's concern to ensure uniformity and better reception conditions for children and young people in all the Member States, but points out that both the European Union and its Member States have a duty to ensure the right conditions for local and regional authorities to receive migrants;</p>	<p>Indeed, several of the urgent actions required to address the protection gaps fall under the competence of Member States. However, the Commission and the European Union agencies will continue supporting Member States in achieving these tasks, using all available means, notably, financial support, advocacy and technical expertise.</p> <p>The Commission is aware that local and regional authorities bear a high responsibility with respect to ensuring adequate reception of incoming migrants, and these financial and logistical efforts need to be properly supported. As indicated in the Communication, Member States should prioritise the needs of migrant children in the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and European structural and investment funds (ESI) interventions, but also draw on other European Union funds to support the reception, integration, education, training and access to procedural safeguards for the migrant children. Further guidance from European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on Reception conditions for (un)accompanied children will provide a useful tool to ensure adequate standards throughout the European Union.</p>

<p>10. The Committee of the Regions points out that protection of children in migration cannot be assured without a broad partnership between all those concerned: the European Union institutions, the Member States, and local and regional authorities, as well as civil society. Local and regional authorities now help to determine the practical conditions in which vulnerable migrant children live, and they play a key role in coordination with other relevant players;</p>	<p>Better coordination between all stakeholders, at European Union, national, regional and local levels is indeed necessary to address the existing protection gaps and improve the protection offered to children in migration. Since the adoption of the Communication, the Commission has strengthened the dialogue with the civil society and local authorities, including in the context of the Urban Agenda and by inviting representatives of the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to relevant discussions with European Union institutions and Members State experts.</p>
<p>11. The Committee of the Regions is concerned that the communication fails to consider the circumstances and conditions faced by local and regional authorities, and emphasises that their experiences and situations must guide the proposals put forward. If new ways of working are to be put into effect, then local and regional authorities must be involved at an early stage and throughout the whole process. The European Union and the Member States must develop targeted and locally adapted support in the form of funding, legislative and regulatory systems, and skills;</p>	<p>The local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play and a notable responsibility with respect to the reception and protections of migrant children. These efforts must be supported and recognised and local and regional authorities can be involved at an early stage and throughout the whole policy-shaping process.</p> <p>In this context, the Commission supports the specific action on unaccompanied minors within the Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and the Urban Agenda for the European Union, which will provide valuable input to current policy and legislatives discussions.</p>
<p>12. The Committee of the Regions sees migration and development policy as closely linked: cooperation at international, national, regional and local level is critical to achieving uniform protection for children in migration in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030;</p>	<p>As noted in the Communication, the protection of migrant children must start by addressing the root causes of migration, i.e. the economic and social reasons which lead children to embark on the perilous journey to Europe. From this perspective, migration policy and development policy are indeed</p>

13. The Committee of the Regions believes that the principle of children's best interests, as defined in the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), must guide decisions and measures throughout the whole asylum process, as well as for children who are not seeking asylum. A child is defined as any person aged 18 or under. To determine a child's best interests their opinions must be ascertained, and for this the child needs access to all relevant information about both their rights and the asylum process. Information must also be appropriate to the child's age and other circumstances. All of this should be guaranteed by appointing a legal representative for the child or, as the case may be, a guardian ad litem;

interlinked, and achieving the goals of the Agenda 2030 will also be a means for addressing the root causes of migration. The Commission supports through development and humanitarian aid the strengthening of child protection systems as well as civil registration services.

The best interest of the child is and should continue to be the cross-cutting principle underlying all policy-making and decisions concerning children at all stages of the migration process. Work is ongoing at European Union level (and especially via the European Asylum Support Office) for streamlining this principle into decision-making at all stages of the migration process and for rendering the principle more operational for each specific stage of the migration process. Determining the best interest of each child cannot be achieved in the absence of proper and accessible information to the child himself/herself and the indispensable guidance that s/he must receive from the responsible/guardian. Therefore, unaccompanied minors must be promptly taken in charge by qualified representatives/guardians and the prompt appointment of qualified guardians should be guaranteed by law and facilitated in practice. The proposals for the reform of the Common European Asylum System contain several proposals to that effect. The Commission advocates that all migrant unaccompanied children should be entitled to the appointment of a guardian/representative to assist them throughout the status determination procedures, irrespective of whether or not they apply for

	asylum.
14. The Committee of the Regions points to the lack of criteria for identifying and assessing the child's best interests, and therefore welcomes the prospect of the Commission and European Union agencies providing guidance, training and tools for this task;	See remarks on best interest of the child above. Furthermore, the Commission supports the work of the European Asylum Support Office on a Practical Guide on Best Interest Assessment in Asylum Procedures, expected in 2018.
15. The Committee of the Regions believes that children's particular vulnerability should be a concern and that cases involving children must therefore be given priority. An investigation should be carried out for every child precisely to establish that child's specific protection needs. There is reason to welcome the specific guidelines on operational standards and material reception conditions for unaccompanied children being drawn up by the European Asylum Support Office in 2017;	The Commission also appreciates and welcomes the work of the European Asylum Support Office to develop Guidelines on material reception conditions for (un)accompanied minors.
16. The Committee of the Regions believes the Commission is right to call on the Member States to ensure that people working with migrant children in any situation have appropriate training. As well as training, there is a need to fund and provide support for the sharing of experience and best practice;	Appropriate training of all officials and private stakeholders coming in contact with the migrant children throughout the status determination process is of paramount importance. The Commission and European Union agencies aim to support financially and provide expertise to initiatives pertaining to the proper training of staff on child protection matters.
24. The Committee of the Regions stresses the need to improve cooperation, monitoring and measures in relation to children who go missing within the European Union. An increasing proportion of children are going missing with only a few being found again. Missing migrant children have the same rights as other children. To counter the	In its Communication the Commission has called for setting up robust prevention mechanisms and effective responses to the phenomenon of children gone missing. To prevent children from going missing, it is important to identify and address the reasons leading them to abscond. Once the reasons identified, it is important to

<p>disappearance of children, a legally watertight and systematic method is needed of reporting and responding each time a child goes missing;</p>	<p>tackle the causes and ensure follow-up actions.</p>
<p>26. The Committee of the Regions encourages the European Union and the Member States to promote the development of different types of accommodation for unaccompanied children. These could be placement with a family, various facilities hosting children, or accommodation with adult relatives. The child's best interest should be assessed before such placements;</p>	<p>The Commission promotes the use of suitable accommodation for unaccompanied children and provides financial support (e.g. funding through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) to Member States to develop or reinforce appropriate accommodation for children.</p>
<p>39. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to make clear in its communication with the Member States that they should draw on the experience and knowledge of local and regional authorities, which can provide many good examples and have considerable experience with the protection and reception of children in migration</p>	<p>The Commission welcomes this useful suggestion and will continue supporting streamlining the views of local and regional authorities into policy-making and implementation in this area.</p> <p>See above on specific action on unaccompanied minors within the Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and the Urban Agenda for the European Union.</p>
<p>40. The Committee of the Regions notes that various types of Union funding and support can facilitate and contribute to protection and integration of children in migration, and urges the Commission to improve the information available about existing support and funding options for local and regional authorities.</p>	<p>Information on European Union support and funding options for local and regional authorities is readily available. Pursuant to its commitment to better regulation, respect for subsidiarity and proportionality, stakeholders participation, transparency and openness, the Commission will continue improving information on funding.</p>