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

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

PLENARY SESSION OF DECEMBER 2020[1]

93rd REPORT

---

[1] Including the follow-up to one opinion adopted during the October 2020 plenary session

N°	TITLE / LEAD DG	REFERENCES
	SG.D2	
1.	**The impact of climate change on regions: an assessment of the European Green Deal** Rapporteur: Andries GRYFFROY (BE/EA)	Council presidency referral COR-2020-03120-00-00-AC-TRA ENVE-VII/009
	DG GROW	
2.	**Towards more sustainable tourism for EU cities and regions** Rapporteur: Manuel Alejandro CARDENETE FLORES (ES/RE)	COM(2020) 550 final COR-2020-00303-00-01-AC-TRA NAT-VII/003
	DG SANTE	
3.	**From Farm to Fork – the local and regional dimension** Rapporteur: Guido MILANA (IT/PES)	COM(2020) 381 final COR-2020-00594-00-01-AC-TRA NAT-VII/005
	DG AGRI	
4.	**EU Strategy for Rural Revival** Rapporteur: Enda STENSON (IE/EA)	Own-initiative COR-2020-01066-00-01-AC-TRA NAT-VII/006
	DG CNECT	
5.	**Strengthening local governance and representative democracy via new digital technology instruments** Rapporteur: Rait PIHELGAS (EE/RE)	Own-initiative COR-2020-00830-00-01-AC-TRA CIVEX-VII/002
6. Opinion adopted during the plenary session of October 2020	**A Strategy for Europe's Digital future and A Strategy for Data** Rapporteur: Mark WEINMEISTER (DE/EPP)	COM(2020) 50 final COM(2020) 66 final COM(2020) 67 final COR-2020-02354-00-00-AC-TRA ECON-VII/004

	DG ECFIN	
7.	**Economic governance review** Rapporteur: Elio DI RUPO (BE/PES)	COM(2020) 55 final COR-2020-01370-00-01-AC-TRA ECON-VII/005
	DG CLIMA	
8.	**Opportunities and synergies of a precautionary adaptation to climate change to promote sustainability and quality of life in regions and municipalities – which framework conditions are required for this?** Rapporteur: Markku MARKKULA (FI/EPP)	Council presidency referral COR-2020-03121-00-00-AC-TRA ENVE-VII/010
	DG REGIO	
9.	**European Commission report on the implementation the renewed strategic partnership with the EU's outermost regions** Rapporteur: Ángel Víctor TORRES PÉREZ (ES/PES)	COM(2020) 104 final COR-2020-03319-00-01-AC-TRA COTER-VII/007
	DG MOVE	
10.	**Challenges for public transport in cities and metropolitan regions** Rapporteur: Adam STRUZIK (PL/EPP)	Own-initiative COR-2020-02613-00-01-AC-TRA COTER-VII/003

N°1	The impact of climate change on regions: an assessment of the European Green Deal COM(2019) 640 final COR-2020-03120 – ENVE-VII/009 141st plenary session – December 2020 Rapporteur: Andries GRYFFROY (BE/EA) SG – Executive Vice-President TIMMERMANS

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
6. calls for the recognition of multi-level governance to efficiently link the Green Deal objectives with a green recovery for Europe; underlines how the ample spectrum of themes that the Green Deal encompasses provides fertile ground for the integration of new and existing plans across sectors, to design and drive forward measures that can valorise the needs and added value of the local context and complement national efforts, in line with the principle of subsidiarity;	The Commission fully agrees on the key role of all levels of governance, including national, regional and local authorities, to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal. On 9 December 2020, the Commission adopted its Communication on the European Climate Pact[1] that aims at bringing together regions, local authorities and civil society to participate and contribute to the implementation of the European Green Deal and contains a number of initiatives to this end. Cohesion policy has a key role in delivering the European Green Deal, as it is implemented in close partnership with regions and cities. It recognises the specific development needs of areas, which face particularly acute carbon-based economy legacy issues. Cohesion policy will ensure that no region is left behind when we work to achieve the ambitious climate goals. For the territories that rely heavily on fossil fuels for the bulk of economic activity the EU will invest in a wide range of new areas that contribute to growth and jobs and help these regions in planning for the structural changes. Going forward, this will be strengthened by the additional support stemming from the Just Transition Fund.
8. recalls the analysis by the European Environment Agency (EEA) showing how sub-optimal implementation of EU	The Commission is closely monitoring the implementation of the key environmental obligations in the Member States. With its country

---

[1] COM(2020) 788 final.

environmental legislation is most often the result of ineffective coordination among local, regional and national authorities, exacerbated by lack of administrative capacity and insufficient funding, lack of knowledge and data, insufficient compliance assurance mechanisms and lack of policy integration; therefore calls for a systematic strengthening of vertical integration to address ambition gaps, align timelines for implementation and priorities for investment, limit duplications of measures, contradictory or disconnected processes, as well as to close gaps in existing policy and legislation[2];

reports, the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR)[3] has mapped for each EU Member State the main challenges in the implementation of European environmental policy and legislation as well as existing good practices and points of excellence. Altogether, there is a huge potential for Member States' environmental authorities at all levels to improve their environmental performance. One way they can do so is by learning from each other.

For this the Commission established a practical tool that facilitates peer-to-peer learning between environmental authorities. Sufficient administrative capacity, in particular skills and expertise are necessary for ensuring good application of environmental law. The new TAIEX-EIR PEER 2 PEER programme[4] provides tailored support to Member States' authorities, including regional and local authorities, implementing environmental policy and legislation. Their staff members can benefit directly from the experience of peers in other countries and regions. Across Europe, there are thousands of public experts working in environmental authorities who possess a wealth of knowledge and invaluable know-how. TAIEX-EIRPEER 2 PEER helps to share good practice in environmental implementation and governance between Member States. It uses the well-established TAIEX instrument the Commission has been successfully applying for more than 20 years in enlargement and neighbourhood policy and, more recently, with assistance on cohesion policy through the TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER programme.

The assistance is provided at request of public institutions involved in the implementation of EU environmental policy and law in the EU Member States, such as: national, regional and local departments and agencies; coordinating authorities; inspection and audit authorities; permitting authorities; regional or local environmental

---

[2] Towards an 8th Environment Action Programme, COR 2018-01672.
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/index_en.htm
[4] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/p2p/index_en.htm

	implementation businesses entrusted with a public task, and with the application supported by an authority or networks of experts involved in environmental implementation and enforcement in cooperation with a Member State environmental authority.
	In addition, the Commission is closely working with the national, including regional and local, authorities for the transposition and the application of the sectoral environmental directives, to strengthen the environmental governance (including on improving access to justice) and, when necessary, by tackling general and persistent breaches by infringement procedures.
10. calls on the European Commission to show greater commitment to the Urban Agenda for the EU and to incorporate it into the Green Deal and digital initiatives[5].	Since the launch of the Urban Agenda for the EU (UAEU) in 2016, the Commission has been supporting the implementation of the UAEU by contributing to the work of the 14 thematic partnerships and providing funding for a Technical Secretariat. To assess the progress made, the Commission launched in 2018 an assessment study, which concluded that the UAEU has been a qualified success, and there is a strong case for its continuation, albeit not necessarily in the exact same form. Together with inter-governmental actors, a reflection process is ongoing on future orientations of the UAEU. Such future orientations will be embedded in the New Leipzig Charter endorsed in November 2020[6]. The Implementing Document of this Charter considers the UAEU as a key vehicle for the implementation of the Charter. In the post-2020 period, the Commission will continue supporting the UAEU in the frame of a European Urban Initiative[7] under cohesion policy. This instrument will support cities of all sizes to build capacity and knowledge, to support innovation and develop transferable and scalable innovative solutions to urban sustainability

---

5   The renewal of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, COR-2019-04829.
6   https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/brochures/2020/new-leipzig-charter-the-transformative-power-of-cities-for-the-common-good
7   https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/brochure/explanatory_memo_eui_post_2020_en.pdf

	challenges. As part of this support process, the Commission will continue interconnecting the UAEU with the main initiatives and priorities of the Commission, including in the areas of the European Green Deal and the Digital Transition.
12. calls on the European Commission and the Member States to enable LRAs to act as key partners in the EU's path towards climate neutrality, supporting local and regional commitment to develop Local Green Deals such as the ones announced in the Manheim message and implementing place-based climate contracts and Climate Pacts[8] designed in cooperation with citizens and key stakeholders including business, industry, research and innovation sectors;	The Commission welcomes the role of the Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) as partners in the implementation of the European Green Deal. The Climate Pact aims to reach well beyond those citizens and organisations who are already aware and active in the climate action sphere and LRAs are the best placed to be the bridge. For example, an 'ecosystem' approach could be employed for involving local communities, small and medium-sized enterprises and all relevant actors in designing and implementing climate action. The Climate Pact will aim to facilitate co-creation of a blueprint approach for such co-operations (via the Knowledge Hub).
	The Climate Pact is a lively space to share information, debate and act on the climate crisis. It is a space for citizens, businesses, civil society organisations and local governments to connect and work together on climate change challenges and opportunities. The Commission wants to:
	- listen to people's needs, provide space for debate and boost motivation for action; - collaborate with the LRAs in this green movement to raise awareness and promote action in the society; - support the LRAs to engage with community stakeholders to work together on, and commit to, ambitious concrete climate action and environmental protection.
	There are several options to get active within the Climate Pact: committing to a pledge, becoming a Climate Pact Ambassador, organizing events, working with schools in the region, etc.
	Committing to a clear and concrete climate-related

---

8   The European Climate Pact, COR-2020-01360.

	pledge could both demonstrate the climate commitment and inspire other European LRAs to take similar actions.
	Such a pledge can go from innovative processes including youth, schools or civil society into decision-making, citizen's assemblies or actions on greening transport, buildings, spaces or equipping people with the right skills for the ecological transition.
	Another option of co-creating the Climate Pact is to become a Climate Pact Ambassador. Ambassadors commit to climate action and engage in debates with people in their communities and networks. The Commission provides support to expand their outreach in and beyond Europe.
	Having a Climate Pact Ambassador would give LRAs a voice and visibility within the Pact.
	The new EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change will also increase the visibility and supply of tools for use by all governance levels, including LRAs. Moreover, given the specificity of climate change impacts, the regional and national authorities in the EU Member States will also have to step up their support in these matters.
13. proposes to work together with the European Commission to launch a European Regional Scoreboard including clear, targeted, user-friendly indicators to measure and monitor the impacts of the Green Deal at the level of regions (NUTS 2) in coordination with the monitoring system envisaged in the 8th Environmental Action Programme.	The Commission agrees on the importance to measure progress of European regions in meeting the Green Deal objectives. Efforts at all levels are needed to meet the ambitions of the European Green Deal.
	Eurostat annually publishes a Regional Yearbook that presents regional data on thematic areas based on European statistics. In 2020[9], the Yearbook included an Environment chapter, with six indicators covering land cover, soil and air quality, and building on data from the Joint Research Centre and the European Environment Agency. In 2021 new indicators, based on existing data, will be added in the chapter, to better cover the objectives

---

9   https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Eurostat_regional_yearbook

	of the European Green Deal.
	The Commission does not consider it useful to design an ad hoc specific European Regional Scoreboard. In developing the monitoring framework for the 8th Environment Action Programme, the Commission will also consider regional data availability to be able to track progress for EU and Member States and, possibly also European regions.
	The regulations that govern the cohesion policy Funds established a robust set of common indicators, which capture deliverables of the Funds relevant for the European Green Deal, for instance monthly data allowing to monitor seasonal pressure of tourism.
17. in preparation for COP26, calls on the Commission to stress the explicit role and contribution of Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions within the EU's revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement; and, more in general, to actively promote the continuous recognition and direct participation of subnational governments in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and into the UNFCCC processes;	The role of sub-national authorities is key in contributing to the achievement of the climate-neutrality objective. However, it is for the Member States, as Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to decide to include an aggregation of regionally and locally determined contributions.
18. strongly recommends securing a harmonised framework and calls on the EU to take the necessary steps to show leadership both at European and Global level on the implementation of the SDGs;	The Commission remains committed to the 2030 Agenda. Under the leadership of President von der Leyen, the Commission has presented an ambitious policy program to deliver on sustainability in the EU and beyond. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an intrinsic part of the President's political programme and lie at the heart of the policymaking on internal and external action across all sectors.
20. urges the Commission to pay special attention to the CO_2 pricing system. Climate transformation needs new investment – especially in the private sector – for adaption and mitigation purposes. In order to attract the	The Commission agrees that a predictable and meaningful carbon price will continue to be an indispensable driver of the low-carbon investments needed to achieve the increased emission reduction target. The Commission will propose to strengthen

investment needed, the price of CO_2 should be set at a predictable and appropriate level. Such system should encourage energy and other companies in having a strong role in achieving the climate targets and in creating new carbon neutral solutions; stresses that a more efficient pricing system for CO_2 including carbon border adjustment mechanism is needed to make CO_2 a transparent part of the economic system and to foster the transition towards carbon neutrality; such system should be designed to encourage energy and other companies to create new carbon neutral solutions. This would create a new level playing field for sustainable action and is a crucial tool for making CO_2 a transparent part on all levels and sectors; calls on the EU to take a strong lead globally in order to develop the necessary system by 2030 and negotiate similar elements with its global trading partners;	the EU Emissions Trading System to ensure its environmental contribution is commensurate to the at least -55% net target by 2030, compared to 1990. The Commission will not only consider changes to the existing carbon leakage protection instruments, but it will also propose a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism ('CBAM') to ensure the price of imports reflects their carbon content more accurately and transparently. Whilst its main purpose is to address harmful carbon leakage, the CBAM could inspire third countries to adopt more stringent climate policies.
23. calls on the European Commission to help providing a clear overview of the scopes and characteristics of existing EU-funded initiatives connected to the Green Deal and dedicated to LRAs, in order to be better guide their engagement;	The Commission agrees on the importance of providing information on EU funded-initiatives relating to the European Green Deal. In addition to the Commission's European Green Deal website and other sites dedicated to EU funded initiatives and LRAs, the Climate Pact intends to facilitate finding information about access to finance by signposting to relevant EU funding sources. Amounts dedicated and spent on European Green Deal investments can be followed on the Open Platform[10] providing financial data and achievements under the European structural and investment (ESI) Funds 2014-2020. In the context of the European Urban Initiative in the post-2020 period, a dedicated urban knowledge base will be developed under cohesion policy in a format of a 'Knowledge Sharing Platform' that is aimed at interconnecting in the short to medium term the urban support tools of cohesion policy. In the

---

[10] https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/

	longer term, the Platform is sought to reach out to other significant knowledge initiatives of the EU including in the area of the European Green Deal. This knowledge base will support LRAs in better urban policy design and implementation, and will also provide guidance for LRAs for their engagement in the various urban-focused initiatives of the Commission.
31. calls for the funding to be interlocked with the 2021-2027 cohesion policy to strengthen the Operational Programmes and greening these economies; highlights the importance of the ERDF and the new Recovery instrument to promote the implementation of the Green Deal;	The EU institutions agreed that 30% of the EU budget 2021-27 and of the EU recovery instrument NextGenerationEU would be dedicated to climate-related projects. In particular, at least 30% of the European Regional Development Fund and 37% of the Cohesion Fund investments will contribute to climate objectives. Accordingly, the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are expected to invest at least €108 billion in climate and environment related projects over 2021-2027. The Just Transition Fund (which was allocated a total budget of €17.5 billion, including €10 billion from NextGenerationEU) will complement the cohesion policy efforts. It will provide targeted support to territories facing serious socio-economic challenges in moving towards climate neutrality. In the post-2020 period, a minimum 8% of the ERDF resources in each Member State must be invested in priorities and projects selected by local authorities themselves and based on their own sustainable urban development strategies and these are expected to include priorities of the European Green Deal.
32. calls upon the EU institutions to apply the principles of partnership and multilevel governance, a strong local and regional dimension and the provision of mandatory participation of LRAs in the development of the recovery and resilience plans[11], at the same	The Commission agrees that an efficient national governance structure, with strong interactions with the local and regional authorities, are important to ensure a successful implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility as well as national ownership of the national recovery and resilience

---

[11] Recovery plan for Europe in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Recovery and Resilience Facility and Technical Support Instrument, COR-2020-03381.

time as promoting an inclusive, accessible and transparent process at all levels;	plans. In this regard, the political agreement on the Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation[12] attributes a strong importance to the consultation process, both in preparing and implementing the national recovery and resilience plan. Member States should in their plan provide a summary of the consultation process with local and regional authorities, social partners, civil society organisations, youth organisations, and other relevant stakeholders for the preparation and the implementation of the plan. Under cohesion policy, a strong partnership principle between the Commission and Member States, regions and cities will be continued in the next programming period 2021-2027. The focus on sustainable urban development has been strengthened. Further to the 8% compulsory earmarking from the ERDF for sustainable urban development, a new Policy Objective 'Europe closer to its Citizens' has been introduced to the cohesion policy framework as an enhanced commitment to integrated territorial development. It provides local actors with opportunities to address their diverse challenges including in the area of the European Green Deal, and to tap into local development potentials of cities.
33. calls on the institutions and the Member States to establish better fiscal frameworks and to gradually end subsidies to fossil fuels urgently in order to create a level playing field for renewable energies, encourage behavioural change and generate the resources to support a just transition; stresses the importance of guaranteeing a sustainable transition, able foster social and economic cohesion;	The Commission agrees that fossil fuel subsidies, which amounted to €50 billion annually in 2018 in the EU[13], should end and that additional efforts, including changes to fiscal frameworks, are necessary in order for the EU to transition towards a more sustainable economy and reach climate neutrality by 2050. The Commission is increasingly cooperating with Member States to reduce fossil fuel consumption and to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, including through actions included in the Communication 'An

---

[12] COM(2020) 408 final.
[13] For more information, see
https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/report_on_the_state_of_the_energy_union_com2020950.pdf

| | EU-wide assessment of National Energy and Climate Plans'[14]. These actions have incentivised investments in green energy and encouraged behavioural change. However, they alone will not suffice to meet the EU's increased climate ambitions[15].

To reduce net EU emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and put the EU on a path towards climate neutrality by 2050, the Commission will table by June 2021 a series of legislative proposals under the Fit for 55 package[16]. These proposals will cover a wide range of policy areas, including more ambitious and extended emissions trading; effort sharing between Member States; land use, land use change and forestry; but also renewables, energy efficiency, energy taxation, and a carbon border adjustment mechanism. Moreover, both the EU long-term budget 2021-2027 and the recovery instrument NextGenerationEU include direct support of at least 30% for climate investments.

To ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, the Commission has launched a Just Transition Mechanism[17]. The Mechanism provides targeted support to the most affected regions, to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the transition, while leaving no one behind.

In December 2020, the Commission launched the European Climate Pact[18], an EU-wide initiative inviting people, communities and organisations to participate in climate action and build a greener Europe. The European Climate Pact provides a space for people across all walks of life to connect and collectively develop and implement climate solutions, big and small. Sharing ideas and inspiring each other, can multiply collective impact |
|--|--|

---

[14] See COM(2020) 564 final.
[15] For more information, see: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/11/european-council-conclusions-10-11-december-2020/
[16] For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1940
[17] For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism_en
[18] For more information, see: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/eu-climate-action/pact_en

	by encouraging behavioural change.
34. calls for direct access to funding from the European level, and for coordinated programmes across all levels of governance and, in particular, of the investment plans in support of the Green Deal and of the Resilience and Recovery Plans;	The Commission agrees that creating a sustainable and inclusive recovery does not stop at the national level. In addition to explaining how stakeholders have been consulted and how their inputs are reflected in their plan, the political agreement on the Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation requires that Member States outline how their national recovery and resilience plan will contribute to enhancing economic, social and territorial cohesion. The Commission is convinced that regions and cities are important actors in the implementation of the European Green Deal to achieve a climate neutral Europe by 2050. The Commission is striving to provide the necessary tools for regions and cities to tackle climate and COVID-19 challenges and encourages actors at all levels to make the best use of these tools. For example, under the European Urban Initiative of cohesion policy, support will be granted (based on direct competitive calls) to Innovative Actions and the future calls are envisaged to contribute to the European Green Deal. The support tools also include a 'Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe' (REACT-EU) under which additional €47.5 billion of cohesion policy funding will be mobilised in 2021 and 2022. This funding will be allocated to the most essential sectors of EU economy and society to lay the basis for a sound recovery, such as job maintenance and creation, measures for youth employment as well as health care systems and small and medium-sized enterprises.
43. calls for a consistent baseline for the monitoring of impacts of actions and measures, based on reliable scientific data, and geared towards tracking progress on the implementation of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement;	The Commission believes that monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is key. The Commission supports a robust global monitoring and review process, which enables to take stock and adjust our approach as needed. The Commission has developed the EU indicator set in a very broad consultative process, which is reviewed annually.

	The SDG reports[19] published every year monitor European Union's progress towards the UN SDGs in an EU context at. They provide a comprehensive analysis for citizens, policy-makers, researchers and businesses to undertake sustainable development actions.
	The Commission agrees that it is important to monitor impact of actions and measures. The Commission's Joint Research Centre and Covenant of Mayors follow rigorous approach to monitor progress related to resilience to climate change, reduction of emissions and energy consumption.

---

[19] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-catalogues/-/KS-01-20-192

N°2	**Towards more sustainable tourism for EU cities and regions** **COM(2020) 550 final** **COR-2020-00303– NAT-VII.003** **141st plenary session – December 2020** **Rapporteur: Manuel Alejandro CARDENETE FLORES (ES/RE)** **DG GROW – Commissioner BRETON**

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	**European Commission position**
1. highlights the fact that tourism is a strategic sector, a tool for integration and a key driver of social and economic recovery: contributing more than 10% to the EU's gross domestic product and providing jobs for 26 million people, it accounts for 6% of total EU exports;	The Commission agrees that tourism is of strategic importance to the EU economy. Tourism is recognised among the key industrial ecosystems under the EU Industrial Strategy[1].
2. underlines the importance of transport and mobility as key factors for social, economic and territorial cohesion in the EU, emphasising the need for a smart and sustainable approach to mobility, especially in regions whose economic development is most jeopardised by the fact they rely exclusively on air and maritime transport;	The recently adopted Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy[2] highlights that fostering cohesion, reducing regional disparities as well as improving connectivity and access to the internal market for all regions, remains of strategic importance for the EU. It is crucial that mobility is available and affordable for all, accessible for persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities, and better connecting rural and remote regions.
3. points out that a wide spectrum of travellers, from a social and cultural perspective and in terms of age and income, creates a broad range of opportunities for many businesses, from multinational corporations to micro-enterprises. The tourism ecosystem comprises sectors such as accommodation, transport, gastronomy, culture, sport and leisure, as well as tour operator services. It includes a total of around 2.4 million enterprises, of which more than 90% are SMEs;	See point 1. The SME Strategy[3] contains actions to support the competitiveness in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across all industrial ecosystems, including tourism.

---

[1] COM(2020) 102 final.
[2] COM(2020) 789 final.
[3] COM(2020) 103 final.

4. supports the recommendations and guidelines of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as well as the One Planet vision for the sustainable recovery of tourism and the promotion of the UN 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the fields of tourism and transport;	The Commission supports the One Planet Vision for Sustainable Recovery of Tourism. The Commission collaborates with and supports the UN's One Planet network aimed at supporting Sustainable Consumption and Production (SDG 12), which includes the Sustainable Tourism Programme. The Commission considers that the One Planet Vision is consistent with the European Green Deal[4] and the Recovery and Resilience principles[5].
	Eurostat is actively engaged in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) initiative developing a statistical framework on the sustainability of tourism[6]. By integrating tourism within economic, social and environmental measurement standards, the framework aims to provide a common language and a structure for the already existing data analyses, and for a more effective data production, management and integration. In parallel, Eurostat is also – in close cooperation with the Member States – revising the legal framework for European statistics on tourism to better address the measurement of the sustainability of tourism.
5. subscribes to the UNWTO's definition of sustainable tourism as one that "takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities";	The Commission's Communication of 2010 'Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination'[7] refers to sustainable tourism, as follows: 'The sustainability of tourism covers a number of aspects: the responsible use of natural resources, taking account of the environmental impact of activities (production of waste, pressure on water, land and biodiversity, etc.), the use of 'clean' energy, protection of the heritage and preservation of the natural and cultural integrity of destinations, the quality and sustainability of

---

[4]   COM(2019) 640 final – Commission Communication on the European Green Deal.
[5]   COM(2020) 456 final – Commission Communication 'Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation'.
[6]   Eurostat is member of the editorial board for this framework, under the UNWTO Committee on Statistics and the Working Group of Experts on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism.
[7]   COM(2010) 352 final.

	jobs created, local economic fallout or customer care. These principles are largely reflected in tourism strategies introduced at national and regional level, although they find insufficient expression in specific actions'.
6. underscores the fact that the crisis caused by SARS-CoV-2 has brought about dramatic change, with immeasurable cost to life and devastating economic consequences which have severely affected Europe, resulting in personal losses, serious financial difficulties and numerous companies going bankrupt, especially in the tourism and transport sectors;	The Commission is aware of the grave social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism ecosystem. It has mobilised significant support for businesses and jobs, including in tourism and transport, to address immediate challenges through Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII), Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE), Temporary State Aid framework, as well as supporting sustainable and inclusive recovery under the NextGenerationEU (including REACT EU) and Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027.
7. recognises that these difficulties are exacerbated in the case of the EU's outermost regions, which rely heavily on the tourism sector, and whose prospects for economic recovery are seriously jeopardised by their almost exclusive dependence on air transport and the impossibility of using other modes of transport;	The special characteristics and constraints of the outermost regions, such as their remoteness, insularity and small size, have been duly taken into account in the Air Services Regulation,[8] enabling Member States to impose Public Service Obligations to ensure adequate connectivity of isolated or developing regions. Air services operated under Public Service Obligations need to meet standards of continuity, regularity, pricing or minimum capacity. In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, Member States may face the need to put urgently in place public services to respond to basic connectivity needs or to replace commercial offers that have become unavailable due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission has provided guidance on the various support measures that Member States may use to that end[9].

---

[8] Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community.

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/what_is_new/air_transport_overview_sa_rules_during_coronavirus.pdf

8. underlines the need to promote sustainable tourism services that take into account Europe's rich historical and cultural heritage as well as its unique natural heritage;	The Commission has been promoting the excellence of the European tourism destinations, built on cultural, historical and natural heritage through such initiatives as European Capital of Smart Tourism, European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN), or through EU programme for the Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (COSME) support for diversification of the sustainable tourism offer, fostering capacity building for SMEs in sustainable tourism[10], deepening the knowledge and launching a dialogue on unbalanced tourism growth at destination level[11]. Moreover, the Commission also funds projects on sustainable tourism through its funding programmes, in particular Horizon 2020 and the Horizon Europe. The Commission recognises Europe's cultural heritage ad a valuable resource in the field of tourism. The Commission encourages sustainable cultural tourism - a vital part of regional and macro-regional development strategies. The Commission coordinated a working group of European experts on sustainable cultural tourism, resulting in the 2019 report[12] with the first definition of sustainable cultural tourism, recommendations and guidelines for policymakers, as well as 27 best practice cases. During summer 2020, also in light of the COVID-19 crisis and related travel bans, the Commission launched several campaigns promoting among others Europe's cultural tourism ('Europe's culture – close to you').
9. notes the cross-cutting nature of tourism, which this crisis has exposed, as a decline in tourism activity not only affects sectors such as	The EU Industrial Strategy[13] highlights interdependencies between players, operating across a value chain within an ecosystem and

---

[10] https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/section/cosme/cos-tourcoop-2019-3-01-boosting-sustainable-tourism-development
[11] https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/tenders/unbalanced-tourism-growth-destination-level-root-causes-impacts-existing-solutions-and-good
[12] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/164ea9c5-2255-11ea-af81-01aa75ed71a1
[13] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en

accommodation, restaurants or transport, but also many areas of the economy with high value;	across different ecosystems.
10. points out that Europe must maintain a proactive stance and show leadership in this and any subsequent crises that may arise, being quick to take the necessary measures to prevent the collapse of the tourism sector;	The EU has mobilised unprecedented financial support under the NextGenerationEU and new MFF to ensure a sustainable and inclusive recovery of the EU economy, including tourism ecosystem. Furthermore, the Commission has been continuously encouraging close cooperation among Member States to address the challenges in the face of the pandemic in a coordinated manner[14].
12. reminds the Member States and the EU institutions of the importance of allocating sufficient financial resources to save the sector and of developing a long-term European tourism policy for a sustainable, quality tourism industry, based on respect for the environment and the fight against climate change;	See point 10 above. The Commission encourages Member States to ensure adequate support for the tourism ecosystem in their Recovery and Resilience Plans, where relevant. Furthermore, with the Communication 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond 2020'[15], the Commission draws strategic outline for the European tourism of tomorrow and calls to jointly start building a roadmap 2050 towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem 'European Agenda for Tourism 2050'. The first steps towards this Agenda were taken at the European Tourism Convention in October 2020, where a shared vision emerged, and a concrete set of actions was proposed by tourism stakeholders.
13. maintains that now it is time to take action and focus on how to improve the present tourism and transport models, ensuring that they are fully sustainable from the social, economic and environmental perspective and using the crisis to spark a debate that will lay the foundations for resilience and sustainability in	The recently adopted Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy includes an action plan, which lists a comprehensive set of measures aimed at putting the EU on the path to creating the sustainable, smart and resilient mobility system of the future and to bring about the fundamental changes needed to achieve the objectives of the

---

[14] Commission Communication 'Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond 2020' of 13.05.2020; one-stop shop of information to citizens for safe travel in Europe – Reopen-EU platform; Council Recommendation of 13.10.2020 on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, based on Commission proposal; Commission Recommendation of 22.12.2020 on a coordinated approach to travel and transport in response to new variant of coronavirus in the United Kingdom.

[15] COM(2020)550 final.

times to come in the tourism and transport sectors;	European Green Deal. These efforts can only be successful if there is sufficient commitment by all those concerned, namely European institutions, Member States and their authorities at all levels of government, stakeholders, businesses and citizens. See also point 12 above on the European Tourism Convention and the European Agenda for Tourism 2050.
On the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism and transport sector in Europe and the EU's short and medium-term recovery and resilience response: the tourism and transport package 14. notes that the UNWTO has estimated that losses caused by the pandemic in the global tourism industry in the first five months of 2020 were already more than three times higher than those recorded in the 2009 international financial crisis[16];	Based on the current evidence (December 2020), UNWTO expects international arrivals to have declined by 70% to 75% globally (62% for Europe) for the whole of 2020. In this case, global tourism will have returned to levels of 30 years ago, with 1 billion fewer arrivals and a loss of some US$ 1.1 trillion in international tourism receipts. Eurostat data for 2020 shows for the EU a decline by 52% of the number of nights spent at tourist accommodation establishments[17]. Domestic nights dropped by 38% compared with 2019, nights spent by international tourists dropped by 68%. Within the group of international tourists, the number of nights spent by tourists from outside the EU was most affected, dropping by more than 80%.
15. calls for closer coordination between Member States, in imposing bans and lockdowns to help reactivate the sector, reducing confusion among tourists and encouraging people to travel; and welcomes the efforts made by the European Commission and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to provide objective and accurate information about the developments of the	On 13 October 2020, the Council adopted, based on a Commission proposal, the Recommendation 2020/1475 on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic[18]. It provides for, among other things, a common 'traffic-light' map, regularly updated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, as well as a common framework that

---

[16] https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2020.18.1.4
[17] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_statistics_-_nights_spent_at_tourist_accommodation_establishments#First_results_for_the_entire_year_2020
[18] Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1475 of 13 October 2020 on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; OJ L 337, 14.10.2020, p. 3–9.

pandemic;	regards possible measures for travellers coming from higher-risk areas. Whether testing can be considered as an adequate substitution for quarantine is still under discussion, given that tests will not detect individuals that are incubating the disease at the time of testing or have viral loads below the level of detection of the testing method used.

In view of the current epidemiological situation, most Member States discourage their residents from non-essential travel abroad. Once the epidemiological situation has improved, Member States should lift the restrictions on free movement in place at the moment. Full and unrestricted free movement must be ensured once the pandemic is overcome.

REOPEN-EU[19] - on-line application set up by Commission to provide citizens with information (reported by the Member States) on measures and epidemiological situation across Europe. This tool makes planning and travelling in full safety easier for the Europeans. |
| 16. underlines how important it is for the resumption of tourism to adopt a common strategy on the mobility of people within the EU to foster greater confidence in travel, in particular by testing COVID-19 in the country of departure, i.e. before people start their journeys, increasing travel safety and avoiding the need for quarantine; | See 15 point above. |
| 18. it is also pleased to see that the following have been approved: the Temporary Framework for State aid measures[20], enabling Member States to provide more support to businesses; the new European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency[21] (SURE), to boost household incomes and preserve productive capacity and | The Commission is pleased to see that the possibilities offered under the REACT-EU were recognised by the Committee. REACT-EU[24] is mostly geared towards the crisis repair, on the way towards the long-term recovery. It may not only provide support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in tourism, but also as support to the green and digital transition in this |

[19] https://reopen.europa.eu/en/
[20] https://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/what_is_new/sa_covid19_temporary-framework.pdf
[21] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0139

human capital in businesses and the economy; REACT-EU[22], enabling managing authorities to change the allocation of the European Structural and Investment Funds in order to tackle the most urgent effects of the crisis; the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, which benefits workers in the tourism sector who have been laid off as a result of the crisis; and projects such as Re-open EU[23]– an online platform to disseminate up-to-date information on travel restrictions in Europe, public health and security measures;	sector. REACT-EU measures will be a continuation of the emergency response under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+) which have so far mobilised €11 billion[25] of existing cohesion policy funding to provide support to SMEs in the form of grants and new or re-designed financial instruments. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund provides support to workers dismissed because of a major restructuring event resulting from globalisation or the financial/economic crisis. It is available for all sectors, if the conditions set in regulation are met (threshold, reference period, etc.).
19. appreciates the Commission's efforts to promote the fluidity of increased volumes of State aid to save European businesses, and proposes that some of the rules (including the modified *de minimis* rule) remain in force for as long as necessary in regions that have been particularly badly hit by the crisis;	The Commission is continuously following the evolution of the crisis and stands ready to make the required adjustments to its crisis-specific State aid response. Indeed, the Temporary Framework has been already amended several times since its first adoption on 19 March 2020 and the Commission continues to review and examine the need to further prolong or adapt the Temporary Framework.
23. asks the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to adopt a set of EU-specific guidelines and checklists for local and regional authorities to serve as instructions for the initial days of disasters, even before national and EU actions kick in; notes that the guidelines contained in the tourism and transport package are already an excellent point of reference;	The Commission adopted Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity on 13 May 2020.)[26]. In addition, the recently adopted Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy notes that, to avoid future disruptions, the Commission will prepare crisis contingency plan(s), bringing together EU and Member State authorities with sector representatives. Its objective would be to ensure

---

[24] Regulation (EU) 2020/2221 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards additional resources and implementing arrangements to provide assistance for fostering crisis repair in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its social consequences and for preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy (REACT-EU).

[22] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/factsheet/2020_mff_reacteu_en.pdf

[23] https://reopen.europa.eu/en

[25] Coronavirus Dashboard, data as of 2 Januray 2021.

[26] Communication from the Commission Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity – COVID-19; 2020/C 169/02.

	business continuity, and coordinate response measures in the transport sector, based on guidelines and legislation developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as for the Green Lanes.
	With a view to further ensuring uninterrupted freight transport operations and passenger transport services in crisis scenarios, the Commission will assess the possibilities of providing for new health-safety and operational measures, and of setting out a harmonised minimum level of essential transport services. The EU may also need to adapt existing transport legislation to allow for a swift response to crises.
25. considers that due to the pandemic there is urgency for new strategies that will support the HoReCa sector, and the development of touristic activities on local level, such as rural tourism, local gastronomy, or local traditions. The trends have changed on a global scale and smaller touristic locations, isolated destinations, where families and smaller groups can travel safely have become more attractive. For tourism to survive in the next 2-3 years, we need to direct our tourists to our own destinations;	The roadmap towards a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem 'European Agenda for Tourism 2050' is intended to guide tourism players - including at the local level - on the shared ambition to maintain Europe as the world's leading tourist destination in terms of value, quality, sustainability and innovation.
This vision should guide the use of financial resources and investment at European, national, regional and local levels. The Commission notes that the Recover and Resilience Facility and the new Multiannual Financial Framework are available for Member States to equip the tourism industry and destinations at all levels with necessary capacities to address the green and digital transition and adapt to the new trends with innovative and sustainable solutions.
Once the travel restriction measures due to COVID-19 were gradually eased in the summer 2020, the Commission has been supporting the promotion campaigns for domestic / intra-EU travel. The European Year of Rail 2021 will be an opportunity to focus on this sustainable, specific travel mode to promote intra-EU tourism. The Commission is working closely

	with stakeholders to promote the role of rail in sustainable tourism and welcomes ideas from regional and local authorities.
26. stresses that the costs arising from COVID-19 related precautionary measures in public transport could be incorporated into public service contracts (PSCs), so as to avoid shifting high additional financial charges to transport authorities, which are often local and regional authorities;	'Precautionary measures' should be defined. They could include sanitary measures, e.g. dispensing gel in the vehicle, disinfecting the interior regularly, limiting the number of passengers per vehicle or blocking a certain number of seats. It could also be operational measures such as e.g. running more busses or trains to keep capacity utilization low and facilitate safer travel. All such measures can be imposed through a Public Service Obligation (PSO) by the competent authorities. Member States can decide whether the additional costs of such precautionary measures would be compensated by the competent authorities (e.g. local, regional or national) or not. If authorities would consider a compensation appropriate, they could proceed to emergency awards of the public service contracts to reflect the new, modified PSO and compensate it accordingly.
32. points out that tourism is now faced with new, high-impact challenges that will have to be addressed, such as climate change, increasing congestion, excessive pressure on infrastructure and water and energy consumption, environmental degradation, that need to be addressed urgently and primarily and the loss of identity and respect for the authenticity of local communities;	In the past years, the challenges of responsible and sustainable tourism development have been addressed with the support of Commission through the COSME's projects of tourism offer diversification, the capacity building of tourism SMEs in sustainability and the recent launch of a project addressing unbalanced tourism growth at destination level. The Commission encourages the industry, Member States and local authorities to address the old structural as well as new challenges that responsible and sustainable tourism development faces. For that purpose, the financial support available under EU funding instruments in the framework of Next Generation EU and the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 should dedicate at least

	30% of expenditure to climate action and 50% to support modernisation.
33. affirms that tourism can be a model activity in the sustainable environmental transition announced in the Green Deal, and believes that Europe can be transformed into the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 through economic adaptation to the digital age and by promoting equality and social inclusion; and strongly encourages the EU institutions and MS (Member States) to take the means necessary to achieve those goals;	The Commission agrees that all players in the tourism ecosystem should contribute to the European Green Deal goal of a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. This vision was shared by the Member States, regions, industry and other tourism stakeholders during the European Tourism Convention and encourage the implementations of the actions proposed as an outcome of the Convention.
38. therefore acknowledges the need to explore and put in place or implement ways of enhancing the connectivity of Europe's cities and regions, of supporting the less polluting options and of improving intermodality in line with the ultimate objective of the Green Deal; thus welcomes the Strategy for sustainable and smart mobility launched by the Commission in 2020;	One of the pillars of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy is to make sustainable alternatives widely available in a fully integrated and seamless multimodal mobility system and to bring about a modal shift towards these more sustainable mobility services.
	The Commission acknowledges that action is needed to transform the transport sector into a truly multimodal system of sustainable and smart mobility services for both freight and passengers. To achieve this, Europe should for example accelerate the building of a high quality trans-European transport network with high-speed rail services on short-haul distances and with clean aviation services improving coverage of long-haul routes, as well as significantly increasing the shift of road freight carried by rail.
	It will also be essential to ensure that key digital enablers are in place, including electronic components, network infrastructure, cloud-to-edge resources, data technologies and governance, or artificial intelligence, especially in relation to software development for mobility applications and services in the field of electrification and automation.
	The 5G Action Plan[27] and the subsequent 5G

---

[27] https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/communication-5g-europe-action-plan-and-accompanying-staff-working-

	Strategic Deployment Agenda[28] will significantly contribute to achieving the goals set out in the Green Deal, along with ensuring the continuity of services in major transport corridors and cross-border sections and helping build a robust digital single market.
39. strongly encourages the EU Member States to join forces to urgently address the lack of sustainable transport alternatives and invest in developing and revitalising long-distance train routes, including night trains, making low-carbon travel a more attractive option;	The Commission shares the Committee's opinion that Member States should support the development of sustainable transport, in particular on a cross-border basis. Various EU funding instruments are available to assist the Member States, including the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, Connecting Europe Facility, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the InvestEU facility.

Making sustainable alternatives widely available is a key focus of the Commission's new Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in which rail features prominently. In 2021, the Commission will propose an Action Plan to boost long-distance and cross border passenger rail services. This plan will build on efforts by Member States to make key connections between cities faster by better-managed capacity, coordinated timetabling, pools for rolling stock and targeted infrastructure improvements to boost new train services including at night. Integrated multimodal ticketing will also be a priority for the Commission in this context.

Better connections are only meaningful if passengers can easily get an overview of the offer, buy tickets and know they will not be stranded if they miss a connection. Starting in 2021, the Commission will propose regulatory measures to enable innovative and flexible tickets that combine various transport modes and give passengers true options for door-to- |

---

[28] document
https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/5g-strategic-deployment-agenda-sda-connected-and-automated-mobility-cam-stakeholder-workshop

	door travel.
	The European Year of Rail will also be a key opportunity to put rail in the spotlight and to make it a more attractive transport option, both for citizens and businesses.
40. supports linking public aid to airlines to commitments by those airlines to meet pollutant emission reduction targets;	State aid cannot be made conditional on pollutant emission reduction targets, as a general principle. This is the case only for specific State aid frameworks whose main objective is linked to environmental targets (State aid environmental guidelines). Member States can of course commit themselves to grant State aid only to companies, which respect environmental targets, but this is not a condition imposed by the Commission.
	As set out in Article 108 of the Treaty, the Commission reviews continuously all systems of aid existing in the Member States. It is the responsibility of the Commission to ensure that aid measures introduced by EU Member States do not unduly distort competition in the internal market.
	While setting public expenditure priorities – including environmental priorities – is beyond the remit of the Commission as a competition authority, the Commission can – and does – in the context of State aid control, provide guidance to Member States so that they can define their policies in line with commonly agreed EU priorities. More generally, State aid rules support the green transition insofar as they help EU governments pool their resources and fund initiatives that benefit climate protection. The Commission is committed to leading Europe's joint effort to respond to the economic implications of the outbreak and help Member States pursue commonly agreed priorities for sustainable and inclusive growth.
42. regrets that support for bus and rail transport (key modes of local and regional transport) is	The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy recognises that bus and coach transport is a very

lower than that for aviation, something that places greater pressure on funding for more sustainable forms of transport; calls for a strong commitment to scale up sustainable mobility opportunities throughout Europe by rail transport, reiterating that the Commission listed improving the contribution of the rail sector to sustainable tourism in the EU as one of the targets for 2021;

efficient and affordable mode of transport. However, we must tackle the serious challenge faced by the transport sector to significantly reduce its emissions. Therefore, the Commission will work towards creating enabling conditions for transport operators to offer travellers by 2030 carbon-neutral choices for scheduled collective travel below 500 km within the EU.

Such carbon-neutral travel can be achieved by the use of vehicles with zero-emission at the tailpipe, by full use of carbon-neutral fuels, by offsetting the relevant remaining carbon emissions, promoting multimodality and cleaner mobility options, or through an appropriate combination of various measures. As one of the most sustainable transport options available, rail is a key component of the Strategy.

The Commission reiterates that, to date, more than 70% of Connecting Europe Facility 2014-2020 (CEF) transport investment has been directed to rail. The Commission agrees that rail should maintain its central place in transport investments in the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. It is envisaged that the CEF 2021-2027 will double the resources from the general envelope required to be allocated to the modernisation of the TEN-T network (i.e. digitalisation, European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), freight transport services, new technologies and innovations, etc.) compared to the CEF 2014-2020 (from ~20 % to 40 %).

In addition, 60% of the CEF 2021-2027 transport expenditures should contribute to climate objectives. This implies a strong focus on such a sustainable mode of transport as railways. Developing a climate resilient, intelligent, secure, and sustainable European transport system (at TEN-T, national, regional and local level) will also be an important objective for the Cohesion Fund and for the

	European Regional Development Fund, providing support in particular in the less developed Member States and regions.
	Rail investments are also supported in this context, in line with the relevant sectoral policy framework (Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy). See also COM reply to para 38. Creating a level-playing field between all modes of transport is a key deliverable of the European Green Deal and the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy. The European Green Deal underscores that the price of transport must better reflect the impact it has on the environment and on health. As announced in the Work Programme for 2021, the Commission will revise the Energy Taxation Directive and, in this context, will look closely at the current tax exemptions including for aviation and maritime fuels and how best to close any loopholes.
	Similarly, the Commission will also revise the EU Emissions Trading System in 2021 to extend it to the maritime sector, and to reduce the EU Emissions Trading System allowances allocated free to airlines. This will be coordinated with action at global level, notably at the International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization. Finally, with regard to sustainable tourism, the Commission is committed to improving the contribution of rail transport to make the tourism sector more sustainable and resilient in the EU. This will be one of the key themes of the European Year of Rail (see point 45).
44. stresses the need for financial support to enable public transport operators, who have suffered a dramatic drop in revenue, to develop a more sustainable transport fleet with zero and low emission vehicles;	The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the revenues of railway undertakings, in particular those operating on a purely commercial basis – i.e. without a government subsidy. To maintain competition, it is important that these companies survive and can continue to offer their services in the rail

	market after the pandemic.
	The COVID-19 related Track Access Charges Regulation, grants Member States the possibility to reduce or waive rail infrastructure charges, aims to reduce the financial burden on all railway undertakings, without discriminating among them. Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) can finance rolling stock. Rail rolling stock may under certain conditions also be eligible for support from the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Commission has been monitoring the situation closely and has responded swiftly by introducing a set of flexible and temporary rules – Temporary Framework – to meet the liquidity needs of EU companies and address other emergency situations.
	In parallel to this, the Commission has completed the fitness check of most State aid rules: the conclusions are published on DG Competition website.
	As regards State aid rules applicable to the rail sector, the fitness check has confirmed that the Railway Guidelines are outdated: many of its sections are no longer applicable; there have been major regulatory and market developments, in particular the opening to competition of the rail markets; and the EU policy priorities in the context of the Green Deal have increased the importance of a modal shift to transport modes less polluting than road, such as rail and inland waterways in order to meet the emissions reduction target by 2050. Against this background, the review of the Railway Guidelines will help the rail sector embracing the green and digital transitions. The review of the Guidelines will build on the comments and suggestions of all relevant stakeholders where a contribution of the Committee would be useful.
45. is interested in working on initiatives linking	The Commission welcomes the Committee's

train travel with cultural discovery and tourism once the crisis is over, developing the #DiscoverEU scheme and cooperating closely with representatives of EU regions to promote rail tourism opportunities during and beyond the European Year of Rail (EYR2021);	support for and active involvement in the European Year of Rail, Sustainable tourism, cultural discovery and regional connectivity will be key themes under the European Year. As the Commission proposed in the tourism and transport package, the European Year of Rail 2021 could focus on this specific travel mode to promote intra-EU tourism.

The Commission is working closely with stakeholders to put forward initiatives to promote the role of rail in sustainable tourism, and welcomes ideas from regional and local authorities. DiscoverEU will be a key component of the Year's programme. A series of activities will be organised under its umbrella, revolving around community-building, communication and learning activities to young applicants. Several stakeholders are also working on initiatives to link major events (sports, culture, etc.) to encourage citizens – and the young in particular – to travel by train. The Commission encourages the Committee to set up initiatives that would link train travel with cultural discovery and tourism. Such initiatives could promote less well-known travel destinations in the context of the DiscoverEU scheme.

To this extent, the Commission has supported, through Europeana, a successful initiative from June to July 2020 to promote local tourism with 3 big components:

- the Discovering Europe29 page showcasing European cultural jewels and hidden gems;

- a Tourism hub to help heritage professionals connect with tourism;

- a far-reaching social media campaign throughout the EU with our cultural heritage ecosystem acting as multipliers to promote European cultural venues and heritage. |

---

29 https://pro.europeana.eu/page/discovering-europe

46. points to the importance of recognising EuroVelo[30] as another TEN-T (Trans-European Transport Network) in addition to the existing networks of roads, railways and inland waterways; this will make cycling infrastructure safer, more direct, well-integrated and connected, benefiting all categories of cyclist and providing a significant added boost to cycling tourism;	Active modes of transport, such as walking and cycling, have gained increased interest in the past years, notably in light of the climate objectives. These modes of transport are however mainly relevant for urban mobility and leisure, and much less so for long-distance transport of goods and persons for which the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) is designed. In the on-going revision of the TEN-T Regulation[31], the Commission will assess how the role of cycling as part of the first/last mile transport on TEN-T Network can be better reflected. At the same time, it should be ensured that TEN-T infrastructure projects are not becoming obstacles for cycling infrastructure networks, but on the contrary possibly contribute to a better cycling infrastructure.
On the impact on the natural environment 47. is concerned that global warming may reduce the attractiveness or even jeopardise the livelihoods of some tourist destinations and reaffirms its determination to combat climate change in a timely manner and according to the latest state of science using the range of initiatives and policy measures set out in the opinions of the European Committee of the Regions;	The Commission agrees with the assessment of the Committee on the impacts of climate change on tourism. The Commission reminds, however, that environmental problems (climate change, biodiversity loss, natural resources depletion and pollution) are interlinked and have similar negative impacts on tourism. The European Green Deal, and the EU recovery plan, aim at addressing all in a systemic and coherent manner.
48. points out that tackling climate change will be crucial for destinations including many coastal and island regions at risk of rising sea levels, ski resorts affected by lack of snow and regions struck by forest fires, floods or blizzards[32];	See point 47.
49. considers that tourism has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to Europe's circular economy ambitions and insists that	The Commission agrees that tourism has potential to make meaningful contribution to the EU circular economy, as part of the green

---

[30] European network of 17 long-distance cycle routes crossing and connecting the entire continent.
[31] Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 f the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU.
[32] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2017)603932

regions and cities must be part of the discussion on how to move the agenda forward on the ground;	transition goal, and encourages Member States to involve regions and cities in the dialogue throughout the process of preparation and implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans and other national programmes implementing EU funds.
50. recommends that the tourism and transport industry boost the supply of climate neutral products by using clean energy, reducing the use of harmful chemicals and plastics, and implementing rainwater and domestic waste water recycling processes[33] that significantly reduce demand for drinking water from the supply network, and recycling of waste, and that these processes be used more systematically;	The Commission agrees with the position and encourages Member States to implement reform and recovery measures that would help achieve green transition goals under Recovery and Resilience Plans as well as other national programmes implementing EU funds. Furthermore, the EU Ecolabel is the official EU label of environmental excellence that can guide the purchase of goods and services with excellent environmental performance. EU Ecolabel can be awarded to tourist accommodations and also to goods and services purchased by tourism operators/stakeholders. Established EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria[34] can also be used to this effect. E.g. EU green public procurement criteria for food, catering services and vending machines[35] contain requirements that can be used by tourism operators to reduce the environmental footprint, including the carbon footprint, of their food services. When it comes to recycling water, the Commission is committed to explore the possible use of reclaimed water for applications other than agricultural irrigation, for which it has recently adopted minimum quality requirements (cfr. Water Reuse Regulation[36]). The Water Reuse Regulation evaluation will examine whether the scope of the Regulation can be extended to cover such other applications.

---

[33] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/takeagreenstep/pdf/BEMP-5.7-FINAL.pdf
[34] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm
[35] SWD(2019) 366 final.
[36] Regulation (EU) 2020/741 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 2020 on minimum requirements for water reuse; OJ L 177, 5.6.2020, p. 32–55.

	The Circular Economy Action Plan also commits the Commission to explore other applications, including in industry. The necessary caution needs to be taken into account when it concerns water intended for human consumption as defined in the Directive 98/83/EC[37] as recycling processes involve a risk for public health.
51. draws attention to the need for greater support for cycling tourism, which benefits local economies by making it possible to visit areas that are normally off the beaten tourist track and using local firms and services; moreover, the infrastructure required for cycling also benefits local residents by increasing connectivity, helping to guarantee long-term sustainability in local communities;	Various EU funding instruments, such as the Cohesion policy Funds, are available to support the development of cycling infrastructure. The Commission supports an integrated development of sustainable transport modes, as cycling, in and between urban, peri-urban and rural areas. The main tool to support cities is the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) concept. A SUMP considers the functional urban area and links to rural areas, and foresees cooperation across different policy areas, including tourism, across different levels of government, and with local residents and other principal stakeholders. As half of European citizens live in smaller cities and towns, they face specific sustainable mobility and transport planning challenges. A dedicated EU guide[38] addresses the opportunities and challenges related to introduction of SUMP's to small and mid-sized cities and towns. In parallel, the Commission strengthens its knowledge on sustainable and shared transport options for rural areas, through pilots and evaluation studies. Shared bicycle schemes for rural areas are in scope of these projects.
53. stresses the importance of promoting sustainable coastal maritime tourism that fosters activities to interpret and preserve the marine environment. In addition, sees great potential in navigation, wind and wave sports, diving and	The Commission supports the innovative, responsible and sustainable activities of coastal tourism that benefit both the marine ecosystem and the livelihood of local coastal communities, diversifying tourism offer in a responsible and

---

[37] Council Directive 98/83/EC of 3 November 1998 on the quality of water intended for human consumption (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A31998L0083)

[38] http://civitas.eu/tool-inventory/sump-guide-smaller-cities-and-towns

water sports in general for science, environmental awareness, ocean mapping and research on environmental issues;	balanced way.
54. highlights the importance of tourism for rural development, which should no longer be interpreted exclusively in terms of agricultural development , but as a driver for the progress of less developed rural areas, with farmland that is marginal and of low productivity but of great value to the environment and landscape and for protecting biodiversity; for this reason,, the European institutions should make appropriate efforts to include tourism and the opportunities it offers in the Biodiversity Strategy, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the new Common Agricultural Policy and the Natura 2000 network and in the long-term vision for rural areas;	Tourism and in particular agri-tourism are essential elements to realise growth, job creation and sustainability in the rural areas. Under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and in particular European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), private investments possibilities are offered, both for start-up and diversification activities, incl. tourism accommodation.

Public investments are also foreseen for leisure and cultural services, small-scale tourism infrastructure, but also to restore and upgrade natural and cultural heritage of villages and rural landscapes. Broadband infrastructure and health care facilities are also supported. Under LEADER ('Links between activities for the development of rural economy'), tourism activities are supported in the context of local development strategies. All aim to increase rural attractiveness and tourism development. However, it is important to note that the CAP cannot be the only policy supporting rural tourism.

The development of rural tourism requires some infrastructure and services development, which can, for example be supported under the Regional policy. National and regional policies have their roles to play as well. The Long-term vision for rural areas will pay attention to these aspects, including the synergies between EU policies to support rural development. |
| 55. considers it important to promote more sustainable tourism with greater added value for the regions by including zero-mile products in tourism services, and believes it is necessary to promote natural and protected areas and the potential of the sky as a tourist resource | The Commission encourages innovative, responsible and environmentally sustainable solutions to diversify tourism products and services, including the synergies with the protection of natural and protected areas. The EU Ecolabel is the official EU label of environmental excellence that can guide the |

(astrotourism);	purchase of goods and services with excellent environmental performance.

Established EU GPP criteria[39] can also be used to this effect. e.g. EU green public procurement criteria for food, catering services and vending machines[40] contain requirements that can be used by tourism operators to reduce the environmental footprint, including the carbon footprint, of their food services.

The EU Natura 2000 network of protected areas[41] is the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world. Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves from which all human activities would be excluded. While it includes strictly protected nature reserves, the approach to conservation and sustainable use of the Natura 2000 areas is much wider. Natura 2000 embraces both our natural and cultural heritage and can offer many opportunities for developing tourism and delivering socio-economic benefits to local communities.

However, if not properly managed, tourism activities can put significant pressure on these areas, which can have negative effects on their conservation. To this end, the Commission has been working in the last few years to strengthen the links between natural and cultural heritage in Natura 2000 and promote and support sustainable recreational activities in Natura 2000[42]. |
| 56. points to the importance of using 5G, IoT, AI and Big Data digital technologies to provide innovative, sustainable, scalable smart tourism services, with high added value, capable of promoting new, more efficient, accessible and inclusive tourism models, extended to all | Access to data is, through fast networks as 5G, therefore essential. The Commission has notably supported, under the 5G public private partnership, a number of tourism-related experiments showing applicability of the technology. |

---

[39] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm
[40] SWD(2019) 366 final.
[41] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm
[42] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/links_natural_cultural_heritage_en.htm

regions, with a special focus on rural areas, and to the importance of having telecommunications technologies that provide sufficient connectivity in these areas;	Regarding remote access including peripheral locations, industry has initiated standardisation of the 5G 'lite' version, that enables long range coverage. The Commission has also supported such industrial developments, notably through 5G international cooperation actions with Brazil, under the '5G-RANGE project'[43].
	Furthermore, in its Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'[44], the Commission identified secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures, and the digital transformation of business as two of the four 'cardinal points' for mapping the EU's trajectory, as part of a 'Digital Compass' to translate the EU's digital ambitions for 2030 into concrete targets and to ensure that these objectives are met.
	The Communication includes the objective of having all European households covered by a Gigabit network, with all populated areas covered by 5G by 2030. It also includes the objectives of having, by 2030, 75 % of European enterprises taking up cloud computing services, big data and Artificial Intelligence and more than 90 % of SMEs reaching at least a basic level of digital intensity.
	In the same Communication, the Commission refers to universal access to internet services - as a principle that could be included in a possible set of digital principles and rights. The Commission will propose to include such a set of principles and rights in an interinstitutional solemn declaration between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission hopes to achieve decisive progress with the other institutions on such declaration by the end of 2021.
On the social and economic impact and the need to avoid tourism being perceived as a problem 57. reiterates that tourism, and in particular	The Commission will address the issue of unbalanced tourism growth in its study and dialogue with stakeholders to be launched in

---

[43] The goal of the 5G-RANGE project is to design, develop, implement and validate the mechanisms to enable the 5G network to provide an economically effective solution for Internet access for remote areas.
[44] COM(2021) 118 final.

overtourism (exceeding the physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological and/or political capacity of destination thresholds[45]), like all human activities, has an impact on the social environment where it is carried out;	January 2021 under COSME[46]. Quantitative analysis of tourism flows have shown vulnerabilities of regions[47]. New studies are being conducted, also with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Committee is invited to collaborate.
59. underlines that promoting and developing tourism in rural areas can lead to economic development and create wealth, helping to attract people to or halt population decline in areas affected by depopulation;	Under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), tourism is an economically and socially important sector. In particular, EAFRD support provides significant opportunities for the development of rural business, employment opportunities and participation in local supply chains. At the same time not only halts population decline and rural abandonment, but also on the contrary facilitates and increases mobility from the urban and pre-urban centres to the rural areas.
60. recommends that policies be implemented to promote and empower women. Women play a key role in preserving tourist businesses, as they are the main players in combating depopulation. Making sure they are employable is a way of anchoring people in an area. This means assessing their needs and giving them targeted training with tools to acquire skills and become more competitive;	The European Skills Agenda identifies tourism as one of four sectors where ambitious up- and reskilling is essential to push forward the recovery and expressly states that this should cover all territories, from big cities to rural, coastal or remote areas. It includes several actions, such as individual learning accounts and targeted micro-credentials that should facilitate the participation of women in up- and re-skilling, and specifically calls for a focus on women in the development of entrepreneurial skills. Female (potential) entrepreneurs need other support beyond skills.

The EU's Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) programme and soon InvestEU will provide financial support (microfinance). To complement with non-financial support such as mentoring, coaching and networking, the |

---

[45] A recent EP study found 105 EU destinations at risk of overtourism. See:
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629184/IPOL_STU(2018)629184_EN.pdf
[46] https://ec.europa.eu/easme/en/tenders/unbalanced-tourism-growth-destination-level-root-causes-impacts-existing-solutions-and-good.
[47] Batista e Silva, et al. Socio-economic regional microscope series - Territorial patterns of tourism intensity and seasonality in the EU, 2019, ISBN 978-92-76-09682-5, doi:10.2760/061885, JRC117669.

	Commission has launched a pilot project to stimulate mainstream business incubators to support inclusive and social entrepreneurship. The 2020 Council Recommendation on vocational education and training[48] promotes vocational pathways – the typical background for tourist workers – as an attractive choice for women and men alike.
62. defines the Barcelona Declaration of NECSTouR "Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit" as a benchmark demonstrating that the sectors of tourism and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, can work closely together for the benefit of the people of Europe and cultural heritage;	The Commission can support this vision with analytical and methodological contributions on sustainable tourism at local level and involvement of local communities.
63. points out that tourism should be seen as part of the solution and not as the problem; therefore highlights the need to propose new initiatives that are different from – and provide a more decisive boost to – those that are already under way; to this end, notes the need to regulate the new forms of tourism and the collaborative economy platforms so that they comply with fair competition criteria, to strengthen monitoring and inspection systems and to guarantee the quality and legality of services provided within a common framework of free commercial competition; at the same time, the heritage, culture, identity and quality of life of the resident population must be preserved;	The Commission announced in its March 2020 SME Strategy that it will continue to explore a possible initiative focusing on short-term accommodation rental services. The objective of a possible initiative would be to promote the opportunities the collaborative economy offers across the single market in full respect of public interest objectives, such as ensuring the availability of housing and protecting urban environments.
64. notes, in this regard, the benefits of disseminating best practice, strategies and methodologies for sustainable tourism developed in the various European programmes such as PANORAMED, MED horizontal projects, MITOMED+ and WINTERMED, in order to promote their capitalisation and	The Commission is undertaking several actions to promote EU Ecolabel and EMAS registered tourist accommodations.

---

[48] Council Recommendation of 24 November 2020 on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience 2020/C 417/01; OJ C 417, 2.12.2020, p. 1–16.

replicability;	
65. consequently, recommends continuing the European Capital of Smart Tourism Award;	The Commission continues the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative, initiated as a Preparatory Action by the European Parliament, under the COSME programme. In the first half of 2021, a new competition will be launched to select two European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2022.
On digitalisation and data, and their advantages in setting up a monitoring and traceability system for actions 66. draws attention to the significant changes in distribution channels and in the way tourism is consumed, enabling many companies to reach their customers directly, an opportunity that has not been sufficiently exploited by small firms;	The Commission vision as expressed in the European strategy for data, is that data is an essential resource for start-ups and small and businesses in developing products and services. The Commission has adopted a number of legal instruments that aims to create trust in data sharing through the Data Governance Act[49], to ensure fair and open digital markets through the Digital Services Act[50] and the Digital Market Act[51], and support the creation sectoral data spaces in sectors highly relevant for tourisms such as the environment, mobility, cultural heritage and smart cities. In 2021, the Commission is preparing a Data Act. It will focus on the relations between different actors in the data economy, in order to create conditions for better access to and control over data, which is very relevant for the sector of tourism and the relations between service providers and consumers. As mentioned above, in its Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade', the Commission identified digital transformation of business as one of its 'cardinal points' The Communication includes the objectives of having, by 2030, 75 % of European enterprises taking up cloud computing services, big data and Artificial Intelligence and more than 90 % of SMEs reaching at least a

---

[49]   COM(2020) 767 final.
[50]   COM(2020) 825 final.
[51]   COM(2020) 842 final.

	basic level of digital intensity.
67. highlights the fact that information is a raw material that is fundamental for tourism, something that is being used by more disruptive initiatives in this sector;	Tourism can benefit a lot from the development of such technologies and new services such as artificial intelligence (AI), Virtual and Augmented Reality. Through the Directive on open data and the re-use of public sector information[52], the Commission has provided a common legal framework for a European market for government-held data. Through an implementing act to be adopted in first half of 2021, it will define a number of high value datasets that Member States will have to make available free of charge, in machine readable formats, provided via Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and, where relevant, as bulk download. The recently adopted proposal for a Data Governance Act aims at creating trust in data sharing and in data intermediaries.
68. points to the importance of the UNWTO initiative Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism[53], including the economic, social and environmental perspectives;	The Commission agrees that an objective framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism is important for tracking the sustainability improvements. See point 80. Commission also agrees that it is important to link the measuring of sustainability in tourism with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular, the SDG target 8.9 to promote sustainable tourism. Eurostat is actively engaged in the development of this statistical framework (see point 4 above).
70. is concerned about the lack of harmonisation and the fragmentation of data in terms of the economic impact of tourism, a state of affairs that undermines systemic decision-making in support of the tourism and transport sector;	The Commission (JRC/ESTAT) is implementing methods and tools for the acquisition of new data for the monitoring and tourism. The proposed Data Governance Act will

---

[52] Directive (EU) 2019/1024 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on open data and the re-use of public sector information; OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 56–83.
[53] https://www.unwto.org/Measuring-Sustainability-Tourism

	facilitate the emergence of trusted common European data spaces for public and private actors to exchange more data at a lower cost and develop novel products and services.
	Investments through a High Impact Project, would cover the necessary data infrastructure, data-sharing tools, architectures and governance mechanisms for thriving data sharing and artificial intelligence ecosystems. Also, the Digital Europe Programme and the Connecting Europe Facility 2 Programme will be instrumental in achieving our goal of strengthening a European data infrastructure and data use that fully respects the European values. National investments, including through the Resilience and Recovery Fund, will be complement this effort.
71. stresses that official data cannot produce information fast enough to keep up with the current situation, meaning that regions and cities have had to resort to other measuring mechanisms that are not yet included in official data;	Remaining barriers to access and re-use of data particularly affect local and regional authorities. The various initiatives implementing the European strategy for data aim to address these barriers. It will offer cities and local authorities the possibility of better supervising and organising data sharing, in particular for the benefit of their own policies.
	The Commission recognises that currently not enough private sector data is available for use by the public sector to improve evidence-driven policy-making and public services such as mobility management or enhancing the scope and timeliness of official statistics.
72. welcomes the fact that in March 2020 the Commission reached an agreement with collaborative economy platforms[54] to publish key data on tourism accommodation, and encourages it to jointly explore indicators to define recovery strategies that will benefit the tourism sector;	The landmark agreement reached with Airbnb, Booking, Expedia and Tripadvisor on data sharing will allow Eurostat to publish data on short-stay accommodations offered via these platforms across the EU. The agreement will for the first time, permit access to reliable data about holiday and other short-stay accommodation offered via these collaborative

---

[54] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_194

	economy platforms. It will contribute to more complete statistics on tourist accommodation around Europe, allow public authorities to better understand the development of the collaborative economy and support evidence-based policies, including policies designed to foster the recovery of the tourism ecosystem.
	The first data will be released in spring 2021 and regular quarterly data releases on occupancy of accommodation facilities offered via these four international online platforms will start towards the end of 2021.
72. recalls that collaborative economy platforms are rising local housing costs by shifting the destination of the dwellings from serving local residents to serving travellers. Despite the decision of the European Court of Justice, collaborative economy platforms are not a simple information provider. Therefore, calls the European Commission to legislate to give the possibility to regional and local authorities to regulate the activities of such platforms in their territories to make sure that it complies with the same administrative rules concerning summer renting comparing to more traditional stakeholders;	EU law does not prevent cities or local communities from dealing with the pressing issues of 'overtourism' and affordability of local housing. The Court of Justice confirmed[55] that EU law enables Member States to protect public interests such as combating the long-term rental housing shortage.
73. points to the need to establish standardised tools that can guide cities, regions and the business sector in their search for more sustainable policies that are embedded in the new European statistical programme and that strengthen the economic, social and environmental monitoring of tourism; highlights the need to facilitate accessibility to data, to enhance the updating and interconnection of such data and to provide a harmonised mapping system;	The Commission (Eurostat) collaborates with other international organisations to develop and promote statistical standards. In particular, Eurostat collaborates with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to produce standards of sustainable tourism (see comment to paragraph 77).
	From the reference year 2020 onwards, European statistics on tourism will be enhanced with accommodation statistics at NUTS 3 regional level and for selected cities (formerly only NUTS 2 regional data). NUTS 2 regional

---

[55] Ruling of 22 September 2020 on Joint Cases C-724/18 and C-727/18 Cali Apartments (https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=224903&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=414994).

	data will now also be available at monthly level (formerly only annual data).
	The first release of this enhanced data will be in the third quarter of 2021. Eurostat together with other Commission services and international organizations developed a new methodology to define cities, towns and rural areas. This has been endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2020. Eurostat is co-publishing a manual on this topic to support countries in producing more comparable indicators by type of area. This definition of cities is also used to collect and publish more tourism statistics in the future.
74. recommends that a legal framework be defined for producing and publishing Tourism Satellite Accounts in each of the EU Member States;	In 2020, the Commission strengthened the discussions with the Member States on a possible future legal framework for Tourism Satellite Accounts. In parallel, capacity building continues via trainings and workshops.
75. calls for better data collection at NUTS level 3 on the number of tourists and people going on trips, on other new forms of accommodation and on the type of transport, together with a regional breakdown and the main local destinations according to accommodation statistics;	The Commission (JRC/ESTAT) are implementing methods and tools for the acquisition of new data for the monitoring and tourism. Commission Delegated Regulation 1681/2019[56] dealt with many of the issues raised. Accommodation statistics will be available at NUTS 3 level and city level (see also para 74 above). Tourism demand data will be more detailed in terms of type of accommodation and type of transport. This data will become available in 2021. Furthermore, the Commission now received data from collaborative economy platforms intermediating short-stay accommodation for tourists (see also para 72 above).
76. recommends introducing a measuring system for monitoring water consumption and	The Commission (Eurostat) actively participates in the UN World Tourism Organisation working

---

[56] Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/1681 of 1 August 2019 amending Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning European statistics on tourism, as regards the transmission deadlines and adaptation of Annexes I and II; OJ L 258, 9.10.2019, p. 1–5.

emissions produced by the tourism sector, including the tourism industry and its characteristic products, in statistical accounts for water, air and energy;	group of experts to establish a statistical framework for measuring the sustainability of tourism (MST). This is work-in-progress. Furthermore, Eurostat ensures consistency of MST with the statistical standard System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), which the EU and the rest of the world use to produce statistical accounts for water, air and energy. This could be implemented by using data from the Regulation on environmental economic accounts, which links environmental data with economic sectors. The latter is ideally done by linking SEEA with TSA, which is a longer-term objective of the work programmes of UNWTO and Eurostat.
77. encourages Eurostat to further explore big data as a source for tourism statistics, taking into account the challenges related to collection, independence, trustworthiness, access, quality and availability over time;	Through the Trusted Smart Statistics initiative, the Commission (Eurostat) coordinates and promotes the research on big data and other new data sources for official statistics, via own projects and via EU-wide cooperation projects – co-financed by the Commission (Eurostat) – carried out by consortia of national statistical institutes and other national authorities. Many of these projects include a component on modernising tourism statistics. Eurostat would also suggest linking it more strongly to the European Statistical Programme (ESP) part of the 2021-2027 Single Market Programme, most notably by explicitly referring to trusted smart statistics.
78. calls for the problem of overtourism to be analysed by including qualitative data on the attitudes of residents to tourism in studies on incomes and living conditions, in flash estimates of the impact of tourism and in the report entitled *Quality of life in European cities* drawn up by the Commission;	Given the concentration of overtourism in very particular, small areas, the existing social surveys such as EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) are not adequate to capture residents' sentiments to the pros and cons of tourism. The future UNTWO statistical framework on measuring the sustainability of tourism is expected to pave the way for information on overtourism, in particular effects on the environment.
79. recommends that further action be taken to	The Commission is examining possible actions

make use of and optimise the extensive work carried out in recent years by the Commission, such as the ETIS system of indicators, the S3 Platform[57] for digitalisation and safety for tourism and the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab;	to optimise the measuring of sustainable tourism, including European Tourism Indicators System for sustainable destination management (ETIS).
80. urges the Commission and the European Parliament to include in the next European statistical programme systems and monitoring tools that are better tailored to meeting the specific needs of regions and cities, allowing for proper traceability of the tourism policies implemented;	In this context, the Commission (Eurostat) would like to draw the attention to Commission Delegated Regulation 2019/1681, which will enhance European statistics on tourism accommodation statistics at NUTS 3 regional level and for selected cities, as well as making monthly NUTS 2 regional data available. The first release of this enhanced data will be in the third quarter of 2021.
88. reiterates how important it is for Member States and their regional authorities to include tourism priorities in their post-2020 operational programmes in order to promote access to European funding to finance tourism projects;	A new specific objective under cohesion policy objective, 'A more social Europe' will enable exploiting the potential of culture and tourism in enhancing economic development, social inclusion and social innovation. It will give more visibility to those sectors and increase flexibility in programming. Support under the new specific objective comes without enabling condition and without prejudice to the possibilities to support culture and tourism under other specific objectives. On tourism as smart specialisation priority.
89. points out that it is difficult for SMEs and destinations to access the current funding mechanism and proposes introducing practical tools (one-stop shop or online tool), linked to the managing authorities of the European funds, to facilitate applications and processing;	The Commission will prepare a guide on the current financial tools available for tourism support, as an update of the one available for 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework.
93. calls on the European Commission to look into the possibility of setting up a dedicated directorate-general for sustainable tourism, and likewise asks the European Parliament to give thought to establishing a special parliamentary committee focused on sustainable tourism.	Considering the horizontal character of tourism policy, the Commission is not foreseeing establishing a dedicated directorate general for sustainable tourism, but continues to closely coordinate its policies and actions across the existing Directorates-General with the support

---

[57] https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/tourism

	of the Secretariat-General.

N°3	From Farm to Fork: the local and regional dimension COM(2020) 381 final COR-2020-00594 – NAT-VII/005 141st plenary session - December 2020 Rapporteur: Guido MILANA (IT/PES) DG SANTE – Commissioner KYRIAKIDES

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
1-2. need for consistency between the various food-related policy areas	The European Green Deal[1] sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. It puts forward a new, sustainable and inclusive growth strategy to boost the economy, improve people's health and quality of life, care for nature, and leave no one behind. The Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity strategy[2], as part of the Green Deal, will contribute to these goals. In addition, policies, such as the common agricultural policy (CAP) and the common fisheries policy, will have to be implemented in compliance with the goals of the Green Deal. Furthermore, the Farm to Fork Strategy also encompasses the international dimension of food related policies including international cooperation and trade policies.
4, 29, 31. notes that sustainable agriculture cannot be developed if the EU continues to import cheap agricultural products which do not comply with European production standards and are in unfair competition with European production and to export its own surpluses at prices below European production costs.	The Farm to Fork Strategy clearly recognises that the transition towards sustainable food systems cannot be successfully achieved by the EU acting alone. Through its external policies, including international cooperation and trade policy, the EU will pursue the development of Green Partnerships on sustainable food systems[3] with its partners in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora. The EU will seek to ensure that there is an ambitious sustainability chapter in all EU's bilateral trade agreements and will propose a chapter on

---

[1] COM(2019) 640 final.
[2] COM(2020) 380 final.
[3] https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/EU-Trade-Policy-Sustainable-Food-Systems-IPES-Food-ECDPM-Joint-Briefing-Note-October-2020.pdf

	sustainable food systems for future trade agreements. Developing countries will be supported in their transition to sustainable food systems through a partnership approach and the Commission will take into account environmental aspects when assessing requests for import tolerances for substances no longer approved in the EU, while respecting World Trade Organization (WTO) standards and obligations.
	The EU is an important consumer of products associated with deforestation and the Commission has committed to delivering, in 2021, a legislative proposal to minimise and/or avoid the placing of products associated with deforestation or forest degradation on the EU market. The Commission is currently working on a related impact assessment.
6. hopes that the role of regions and cities as key players in the food transition will be recognised and supported.	The Commission acknowledges the important role played by local and regional authorities in the transition towards sustainable food systems. In this respect, the Commission aims to strengthen at all levels the role of all food chain partners by encouraging further vertical integration and dialogue.
	The Commission's proposal on the common agricultural policy Strategic Plans[4] gives considerable flexibility to Member States to provide interventions aimed at addressing regional and territorial specificities, including for eco-schemes, and to organise the responsibilities of its regional authorities in terms of management of these programmes. The proposal also provides for the obligation to involve different levels of public authorities and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of the CAP plans. The CAP recommendations, recently published by the Commission[5], provide guidance in this respect.
7. recommends changes to existing instruments under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	In the new common agricultural policy proposal, a fairer distribution of support among farmers has

---

[4]   COM(2018) 392 final.
[5]   https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2473

and closer monitoring of the trend towards land concentration in favour of agribusiness, the increase in the price of land, the abandonment of land in marginal areas and the consequent loss of agricultural land by small to medium-sized producers and new farmers.	been proposed, including a cap of €100,000 on direct payments per farm, as well as a great attention to small and medium-sized farms, while ensuring that direct support is provided to genuine farmers. Targeted support is provided to agro-ecological methods and other practices tackling climate change, loss of biodiversity and natural resources, while preserving and enhancing forest and areas with natural constraints. The latter aims to prevent land abandonment and keep farmers on land. Special attention is also dedicated to encourage young farmers to join the profession, acquiring the necessary knowledge and improving access to land.
8. boost organic farming supporting the role of local and regional policies as a means of preserving and increasing land used for organic products.	The common agricultural policy proposal provides considerable flexibility to address local needs as part of EU's well-coordinated and monitored framework. Farmers will be supported to invest more on sustainable agricultural practices, which are beneficial for the environment, healthy diets, the climate and natural resources. Local and regional authorities will have the opportunity to support investments on sustainable farming, organise and steer the transition process under a national framework. Relevant actors at local level are encouraged to be involved in the stakeholders group, and assisting the national authorities with the preparation of the CAP strategic plan. The ambitious goal to reach the 25% the EU's agricultural land used for organic farming by 2030 is expected to be achieved by stimulating both supply and demand, as in the long term this target will only be economically sustainable if the organic market develops in the same proportion. Member States are encouraged to support processing and marketing of organic products, producer groups or local start-ups. The CAP will continue providing the relevant support including for investments, quality schemes but also knowledge transfer and advice that may be

	required to enter the organic farming sector. The Commission has adopted an Action Plan for the future of Organic Production in the European Union on 24 March 2021.[6]
9. calls for greater emphasis to be placed on short supply chains and for recognition of the diversity of production systems across Europe, including alternative production systems, aimed at promoting local and regional forms of production, processing and marketing, based on nutritional quality and animal and environmental well-being.	Improving the position of farmers in the food supply chain is an important objective of the future CAP as proposed by the Commission. To strengthen farmers' position in the supply chain, recent EU legislation on unfair trading practices[7], marks an important milestone. The Commission is closely monitoring its transposition at national level. In addition, rural development support, including for the European Innovation Partnership, aims to help farmers and relevant stakeholders to transform the food supply chain at local level, sharing good practices and filling gaps with knowledge and targeted investments. The CAP proposal supports the establishment and implementation of cooperation, including the setting up of quality schemes (e.g. requiring sustainable management of natural resources); collective environmental and climate action; the promotion of short supply chain and local markets. This is expected to stimulate growth of short supply chains and contribute to a better return for farmers' products.
10. recognises that the production, processing, retailing, packaging and transportation of food contribute to air, soil and water pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and have a profound impact on biodiversity – Point e.	On 17 September 2020 the Commission adopted a Communication on Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition[8], in which it proposed an EU-wide, economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, to set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate neutral by 2050. The European Council of 10-11 December 2020 endorsed the at least 55% target proposed by the Commission.

---

[6] COM(2014) 179 final.

[7] Directive (EU) 2019/633 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain; OJ L 111, 25.4.2019, p. 59–72.

[8] COM(2020) 562 final.

	Achieving at least 55% greenhouse gas emissions reductions will require action in all sectors of the economy. The Commission is currently preparing the review of all relevant climate and energy policy instruments to achieve the emission reductions with a view to making appropriate proposals by June 2021, including the review[9] of the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation[10].
11-12. calls on the Commission to produce, as part of its ongoing work, impact assessments on the design of the quantified targets.	The quantitative targets contained in the strategy are EU wide targets reflecting a political commitment. Any legislative proposals to make any of these targets legally binding will be accompanied by a thorough impact assessment and public consultation, in line with the Better Regulation principles, and will ultimately be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission will monitor the cumulative impact of the actions foreseen in the strategy on competitiveness, the environment and health and this will inform future reviews, as set out in the Strategy.
13. recommends introducing more stringent measures against the environmental impact of intensive industrial livestock farming.	In general, better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity. As announced under the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission will revise the animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and the slaughter of animals, to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare. Options for animal welfare labelling will be also considered to better transmit value through the food chain. The common agricultural policy has helped and will continue helping in promoting sustainable forms of livestock management, through agri-

---

[9] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-european-green-deal/file-lulucf-revision
[10] COM(2016) 479 final.

	environment-climate measures, and with relevant investments in sustainable practices.
14. calls for the new eco-schemes to provide an equitable, obligatory, effective and increasingly important funding stream to promote sustainable production practices that significantly improve, among other things, carbon sequestration (carbon farming) by farmers and foresters, as well as biodiversity.	The new 'eco-schemes' will provide European farmers with a major stream of funding to boost their sustainable practices, in areas such as agro-ecology (including organic farming), carbon farming, agro-forestry and precision farming. Enhanced conditionality, eco-schemes and agri-environment-climate interventions will be combined in the CAP plans. The Commission supports the introduction of a substantial minimum ring-fencing budget for eco-schemes in the ongoing negotiations with the European Parliament and the Council.
15. shift to sustainable fish and seafood production.	The main challenge of common fisheries policy (CFP) remains its implementation and the Commission will step up efforts to strengthen existing measures (such as the landing obligation) to bring fish stocks to sustainable levels. The proposed revision of the EU's fisheries control system, once adopted, will also contribute to enhancing compliance and traceability of seafood products. The CFP Regulation[11] already contains provisions that take on board the specificities of small-scale coastal fisheries (e.g. on access to waters). The recently adopted European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) for the period 2021-2027 foresees 100% of public aid for projects involving small-scale coastal fisheries.
	The common fisheries policy also promotes the sustainable development of EU aquaculture. The Farm to Fork Strategy stresses the potential of seafood farming as a low-carbon source of protein and also sets specific targets in terms of organic aquaculture and to reduce the use of antimicrobials. It calls also for support to algae production, given its important potential to

---

[11] Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy, amending Council Regulations (EC) No 1954/2003 and (EC) No 1224/2009 and repealing Council Regulations (EC) No 2371/2002 and (EC) No 639/2004 and Council Decision 2004/585/EC; OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22–61.

	provide protein.
	EU legislation on environmental protection and animal health and welfare establishes conditions for this activity. The Commission has been working on a review of the Commission Strategic Guidelines on EU aquaculture[12] with the view of setting a vision for an EU sector that is more competitive and sustainable and contributes to the objectives of the European Green Deal. The Commission expects to adopt the new Guidelines in Spring 2021.
16. calls for proposals to be drawn up aimed at establishing maritime spatial planning and creating a network of areas in which all forms of fishing are prohibited for a sufficient period of time in order to more effectively achieve a balance between exploiting fish stocks and the sea's capacity to replenish those stocks; also calls for efforts to focus on ensuring greater efficiency when establishing fisheries management plans in the areas that are most vulnerable from an environmental point of view.	Maritime spatial planning (MSP) is one of the key tools for the sustainable management of ocean space and resources. The MSP Directive[13] obliges Member States to establish maritime spatial plans by 31 March 2021 at the latest. While there is no obligation regarding which activities to include in national spatial plans, the Commission developed several guidance documents on how to best incorporate the fisheries sector in the process.

The Commission does not agree with prohibiting all forms of fishing in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Human activities can take place in MPAs as long as they are in line with the conservation objectives of the site. Conservation measures should be based on science.

The Commission notes that in the Committee opinion on Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 (BDS)[14], the Strategy and the Council Conclusions were welcomed, without calling for a ban of all fishing activities in MPAs.

Indeed more efforts are needed to establish efficient and effective fisheries management measures in Marine Protected Areas and the common fisheries policy provides a wide toolbox |

---

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12261-Strategic-Guidelines-for-EU-aquaculture-update

[13] Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning; OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 135–145.

[14] see ILCEI presentation:
https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/ENVE/CoR%20Biodiversity%20Opinion_Stakeholder%20Consultation_ICLEI%20Presentation_20200130.pptx

	to this end.
17, 18, 19. reiterates the importance of consumer food choices and eating habits as a key driver of food system change; supports the Commission in its intention to facilitate the transition to healthy and sustainable diets, in line with Goal 12 of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development15; calls on the Commission to devise more appropriate schemes for the nutritional labelling of food; stresses the importance of going beyond information labelling measures, and deploying educational measures.	The Farm to Fork Strategy aims at making the healthy choice the easy choice for consumers and to increase the availability of sustainable and healthy food. The Strategy also recognises the importance of empowering consumers to make informed, healthy and sustainable food choices. To this end, actions on consumers' information and awareness raising are central in the framework of the strategy. An example of such actions is the proposal for a harmonised front-of-pack nutrition labelling that the Commission has committed to put forward by the end of 2022.
20. strongly supports measures to ensure that the price of food reflects its real environmental and social costs and that primary producers receive a fair income for their work.	The Commission proposal for the future common agricultural policy aims to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, and contribute to better returns for farmers. To this end, the Commission aims, among others, to promote and facilitate producer cooperation. Moreover, recent EU legislation on unfair trading practices marks an important milestone in this area. The commission is closely monitoring its transposition at national level.
21. calls on the Commission to make the right to food one of the cornerstones in the implementation of the strategy.	The Farm to Fork Strategy is central to the Commission's agenda to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The strategy recognises the need for a robust and resilient food system that ensures access to a sufficient supply of affordable, nutritious and sustainable food for all citizens. Food security and food safety are prerequisites for the implementation of the strategy. Building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, the Commission is working on developing a contingency plan. The contingency plan will allow the Commission to monitor the structural resilience of the food supply chain and to ensure

---

15 SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production.

	food supply and food security also in times of crisis. The contingency plan will include the creation of a coordinated crises preparedness and response mechanism: the Commission will coordinate this response, with the involvement of Member States.
22, 23, 24. sustainable public procurement, Green Food Procurement, educational programmes.	In order to help Member States improve the availability and price of sustainable food and to promote healthy and sustainable diets in institutional catering, the Commission announced a number of actions. One of them is to determine the best way of setting minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement. This will help cities, regions and public authorities to play their part by sourcing sustainable food for schools, hospitals and public institutions and it will also boost sustainable farming systems. Education is also central in achieving a sustainable food system: the Commission will also review the EU school scheme to enhance its contribution to sustainable food consumption and in particular to strengthen educational messages on the importance of healthy nutrition, sustainable food production and reducing food waste.
25, 26 , 27 ,28. reducing and preventing waste, promoting a circular economy.	The Commission is committed to halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030. Using the new methodology for measuring food waste and the data expected from Member States in 2022, it will set a baseline and propose legally binding targets to reduce food waste across the EU. Food loss and waste prevention will also be integrated in other policies such as the Circular Economy Action Plan – one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal. Taking into account consumer research, the Commission will revise EU rules on date marking.
30. insists on the need to assess trade agreements with due regard to the GHG emissions reduction target and for such	The Commission plans to deliver, in the second quarter of 2021, a legislative proposal to minimise the risk of deforestation and forest degradation

agreements to be based on the concept of sustainable development; calls for more robust chapters on sustainable forest management and the fight against deforestation and human rights violations, and in support of animal welfare.	associated with products placed on the EU market. The Farm to Fork Strategy will support the global transition towards sustainable food systems by seeking to ensure that there is an ambitious sustainability chapter in all EU bilateral trade agreements, and will propose a chapter on sustainable food systems for future trade agreements. It will ensure full implementation and enforcement of the trade and sustainable development (TSD) provisions in all trade agreements, including through the EU Chief Trade Enforcement Officer.
32. recommends that the future CAP, CFP, operational programmes and national CAP strategic plans be consistently adapted to the objectives set out in the European Green Deal, notably within the "Farm to Fork" and "Biodiversity for 2030" strategies.	Appropriate result indicators and a regular review are essential to monitor the improved performance of the reformed common agricultural policy, as laid down in the new strategic plans, and to make visible the contribution of the CAP to the Green Deal objectives. In the CAP recommendations, issued to each Member States in December 2020, the Commission asked to establish national values for the six quantified Green Deal targets in its CAP strategic plan. In this respect, indicators and reference values for these targets have been established in the Commission Communication accompanying these recommendations. The Commission will also closely monitor Member State progress using the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System of the future CAP, covering both the first and the second pillar.
33. supports ambitious goals for implementing a green transition in European agricultural production should go hand in hand with an ambitious budget for the CAP.	By addressing new challenges and new priorities, the total allocations of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 substantially increased compared to the allocations in the MFF 2014-2020. Whilst the share of the common agricultural policy in the MFF has decreased from 35.3% over 2014-2020 to 31.3% for 2021-2027 (for both periods, based on EU-27 figures), the total CAP budget is increased. The Commission is convinced that the MFF 2021-2027 as agreed by the Council and the Parliament provides adequate

	resources to support a green transition of EU agriculture. The green architecture proposed under the new CAP proposal, together with more targeted and effective support measures, will help European farmers to meet the Green Deal targets. Within the ongoing discussion with the European Parliament and the Council, the Commission aims to ensure that the new CAP will have the level of ambition to meet those targets in the interest of the Union. As set out in the Farm to Fork Strategy, the transition has to happen along the entire food chain.
34. involve all food-system stakeholders in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy.	Consulting and interacting with all relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the Strategy is of utmost importance for the Commission, which seeks their views through the various stakeholders' fora and expert groups covering the areas of the Farm to Fork Strategy. Considering the importance of the international dimension of the Strategy to ensure its consistency, the EU will pursue the transition towards sustainable food systems in cooperation with partners in bilateral, regional and multilateral fora.

N°4	EU Strategy for Rural Revival Own-initiative COR-2020-01066 – NAT-VII/006 141st plenary session: December 2020 Rapporteur: Enda STENSON (IE/EA) DG AGRI – Commissioner WOJCIECHOWSKI

Points of the Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
Introduction: 2. (…) the long term vision for rural areas should be transformed into a concrete policy framework – Rural Agenda. The Rural Agenda should propose a set of integrated policies that enable and empower rural communities to turn challenges into advantages; these challenges include decarbonisation, climate change, digitalisation, active management of natural resources, sustainable mobility and fair job and income opportunities, generational change, integration of new migrants and social innovation; 8. (…) the EU's rural regions have great potential to produce solutions to current and emerging challenges. (…)	The need for designing a Long-term Vision for Rural areas was underlined in President von der Leyen's political guidelines for the Commission 2019-2024[1]. The Vision aims at enabling rural areas to make the most of their unique potentials and of the many opportunities ahead while supporting them in delivering innovative, inclusive and sustainable development solutions. The corresponding Commission Communication is planned for the second quarter of 2021. The Communication will set out a Vision for the future of rural areas with 2040 as horizon, building on the outcome of a wide public consultation process, the result of the foresight exercise, as well as drawing on the Report on the impact of demographic change[2] and the Green Paper on Ageing[3]. The integrated and sustainable development of rural areas will drive the Vision, which will thus encompass all the dimensions and sectors at play, reflecting the balance of, and need for, diversification of economic activities and the importance of farming communities. The Vision will consider the coordination of all EU policies and funding sources, beyond the scope of agriculture to embrace all relevant aspects for the future of rural areas. These include links with other initiatives under the Green Deal and with the Conference on the future of Europe.

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf
[2] https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/report-impact-demographic-change-reader-friendly-version-0_en
[3] https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/green-paper-ageing-fostering-solidarity-and-responsibility-between-generations_en

	An assessment of the complementarity and coordination between different policies will be carried out as part of the supporting analytical work.
	The Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas is itself not a funding mechanism.
	Nevertheless, the Vision will be concrete and operational, containing tools and actions to help rural people address their own unique set of pressing issues, from demographic change to physical and digital connectivity, the risk of poverty and limited access to services and transport. It should specifically focus on young people and the gender dimension.
3. (…) the Rural Agenda should: - ensure that mutually beneficial rural-urban linkages are integrated into all EU policies by making the most of the strong interdependencies between rural and urban areas;	The Commission shares the view that there is a need to ensure the mutually beneficial rural-urban linkages. Enhancing the role of small cities and urban/rural links to support rural areas is crucial, taking into account that the challenges and opportunities of rural areas close to a city are not necessarily the same as those of remote rural areas. This request is also in line with the functional area approach encouraged by both the new round of the EU Cohesion Policy post 2020[4] and the Territorial Agenda 2030 for Europe[5], adopted in December 2020. The Vision will build on this approach by taking into consideration the remoteness factor i.e. the different challenges and needs of the sparsely populated and remote areas compared to the areas closer to urban concentrations.
- diversify entry points and mainstream rural issues into all EU policies. EU funding is lacking in terms of both quantity and quality; - monitor EU spending using a rural proofing approach;	The Commission shares the view that the needs of rural areas have to be addressed through many angles. It is not possible for any one single policy to deliver, alone, on all this. The Vision will consider how rural areas can make the most of EU

---

[4]   https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/budget-may2018-new-framework-glance_en.pdf
[5]   https://www.territorialagenda.eu/files/agenda_theme/agenda_data/Territorial%20Agenda%20documents/
TerritorialAgenda2030_201201.pdf

	policies and funding programmes, including those to sustain the post Covid-19 recovery.
	All relevant EU funding sources should work in synergy to financing rural needs.
	The Vision will address rural proofing as a mechanism to guide policy making in all areas i.e. to identify relevant initiatives, ensure complementarity between actions and between financial sources, monitor relevant legislative files and programmes.
	In the Cork declaration[6] (back in 2016) stakeholders called for a rural proofing mechanism: all policies should systematically use a 'rural lens', notably as regards the impact and potential contribution they could have on the development of rural areas and communities. 'Rural proofing' was also included by the Commission in its Future of Food and Farming Communication of November 2017[7].
	Developed and tested methodologies and models are already included in the Better Regulation Tool Box No 33 for Territorial Impact Assessments (TIA)[8] that can analyse possible asymmetrical effects on urban, rural, coastal, insular, cross border and outermost regions.
- harmonise the different regulations and reintegrate the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in the common provision regulation in order to encourage and facilitate multi-funded projects in rural areas, not necessarily linked with agriculture;	The Commission encourages multi-funded projects to unlock the potential of rural areas and enhance their sustainable and integrated development. The Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas will address the needs for synergies between public policies in rural areas.
	The fact that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will no longer be fully covered by the Common Provision Regulation does not mean that coordination mechanisms between the future Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plans and the

---

[6] https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/cork-declaration_en.pdf
[7] COM(2017) 713 final.
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-33_en_0.pdf

	Cohesion Policy Partnership Agreements and operational programmes will not exist. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will operate ensuring complementarities and synergies with regional and cohesion policies. Complementarities with the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) will be ensured in the programming documents presented by Member States to the Commission such as Partnership Agreements, CAP Strategic Plans (CAP SP) and sectoral programmes. In the preparation of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, possible additional ways for more complementarity between Funds are analysed.
- rethink the urban-rural typology to improve the targeting of support;	The urban-rural regional typology is used for statistical comparisons. It is not used to target support. This typology can be further refined and extended e.g., by incorporating the remoteness dimension or by combining with other typologies (eg. coastal versus non-coastal areas). The Vision is not intended to create new rural-urban typologies but will be sensitive to the diversity of rural areas stressing a bottom-up approach to design actions so that they meet different local and regional needs. It will also raise the opportunity of continuing the work on functional rural areas, their specificities, opportunities, challenges, and urban/rural links.
- increase the role of the local and regional levels in the development and governance of rural policies. The involvement of local action groups in deploying this type of governance must be increased, (…) through bottom-up initiatives like LEADER/CLLD;	The Commission is committed to recognizing the importance of the role of local and regional level in the policy making. The Long-term Vision for Rural Areas is being designed based on a wide public consultation, with the participation of local authorities and local stakeholders. Through its territorialisation linked to Policy Objective 5 'A Europe closer to citizens' and to the use of territorial instruments such as Community-led local development (CLLD) in its other thematic Policy Objectives, post 2020 Cohesion Policy can provide support to all rural

	areas, making it conditional simply upon the development of integrated territorial strategies and participation of stakeholders in territorial strategy design and project selection. This is indeed essential to trigger tailor made local policy solutions and public investments.
- combat depopulation and social exclusion by for example promoting the smart villages initiative, the bioeconomy and social innovation and closing the digital divide;	The depopulation problem is one of the major problems that will be assessed the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, the aim being to manage it in a smart way through investments, improving public services and mitigation and adaptation strategies, In this context, social exclusion, bioeconomy, digital divide and social innovation are among the key elements considered in the analysis. An integrated approach to rural development will help combat depopulation by opening new job opportunities including in the sustainable management of Natura 2000 areas and their assets, and through sustainable rural tourism. In her State of the Union Address on 16 September 2020[9], President von der Leyen stressed the need to bring new life to rural areas. Addressing the digital divide would be a huge opportunity there and the prerequisite for revitalising rural areas. The President stressed that 40% of people in rural areas still do not have access to fast broadband connections. In its Communication '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade', the Commission further acknowledges the digital divide exacerbated by the pandemic and the opportunity to bridge this gap. The Communication sets several targets for 2030, notably on connectivity with the objectives of having all European households covered by a Gigabit Network and all populated areas covered by 5G. Access to high-speed internet should therefore be ensured. The Farm to Fork strategy[10] includes the

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655
[10] COM(2020) 381 final.

	aim for all rural areas to have access to fast broadband by 2025 so that they can benefit from the opportunities ahead. The Connecting Europe Facility[11] will contribute to improving digital connectivity infrastructures across European Union territories and the Digital Europe Programme[12] will support projects aiming at improving deployment, best use of digital capacities and interoperability.
	In rural areas, Post 2020 Cohesion Policy Objective 1, 'A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation' will reap benefits of digitisation for creating regional and local jobs and build competences for innovation and the revitalisation of services.
	The Commission encourages the uptake of Smart Villages concept[13] that enables traditional and new networks and services to be enhanced by means of digital, telecommunication technologies, innovation and the better use of knowledge, for the benefit of inhabitants and businesses. A Smart Village strategy, jointly supported by European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Cohesion Policy could pay attention to several pressing rural issues from services to environment.
	For its part, the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas will also be anchored in the digital transition with the aim of developing appropriate digital infrastructure allowing for better accessibility of e-services.
6. (…) the current pandemic crisis has exposed and exacerbated the consequences of number of long-standing threats faced by rural areas (…) 7. (…) the pandemic can change consumption and productive patterns, remote working habits,	The COVID-19 crisis may introduce significant changes to society (increased teleworking, appreciation for green spaces) which rural areas could benefit from. Actions taken at European level may facilitate and support rural residents in benefitting from the opportunities ahead and

---

[11] Regulation (EU) No 1316/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, amending Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulations (EC) No 680/2007 and (EC) No 67/2010; OJ L 348, 20.12.2013, p. 129–171.

[12] COM(2018) 434 final.

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eu-support-smart-villages

the importance of quality life and forms of mobility, which may open new opportunities for sustainable growth in rural regions (…)	ensure that they are not 'left behind'. The Vision aims at exploring these opportunities and designing improved tools to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the COVID-19 recovery.
Funding: 11. calls for increase to the European budget dedicated to rural development (…) Worryingly, the new MFF allocation is significantly lower than in the current programming period and the CoR calls for this to be reversed and rural funding increased (…);at the same time calls for using new recovery and resilience funds and programmes in large scale for rural development as the rural areas belong to the most vulnerable ones;	The European budget for Rural Development has now been agreed by the Council and the European Parliament, as reflected in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) Regulation. The Commission would like to highlight the fact that the agreed Rural Development allocation for 2021-2027 has not been decreased as compared to the 2014-2020 period (€95.51 billion in current prices for EU-27 including NextGenerationEU funds, vs was €95.58 billion for EU-28 in 2014-2020 period). Member States and Regions can support investments in rural areas also via Cohesion Policy and other EU programmes and instruments. The Commission will also take due account of the needs of rural areas when discussing with the Member States their Recovery and Resilience Plans. Overall for post 2020 there are more available funds from which Member States and regions can support rural areas.
12. rejects the idea of increasing co-financing for the second pillar of the CAP, as this would most disadvantage the poorest farmers, less developed regions and rural areas; 13. proposes to transfer up to 15% of funds from CAP pillar 1 to pillar 2 without co-financing, along with an additional 15% for environmental and climate measures and 2% for young farmers;	The Commission would like to stress that co–financing rates have been agreed between the Council and the European Parliament as part of the MFF agreement between institutions.
16. requests that financial instruments be developed further and adapted to small-scale projects, possibly through the creation of "rural development banks", which could act as intermediaries between lending institutions and	The Commission encourages managing authorities and supports the set up and development of financial instruments for agriculture and rural development under the Rural Development Programmes (EAFRD). The current and newly

loan recipients;	proposed legal basis allow for full flexibility in the choice of Member States when targeting their financial instruments. In this context, small-scale projects are always covered. In addition, the Commission has set up a technical assistance platform called fi-compass through which it shares experience among interested stakeholders, provides advice to managing authorities, makes analyses and assessments, and creates basis for further development of the subject.[14] Financial instruments, as a type of support, are channelled through the national and/or regional financial systems. It is the responsibility of the Member States to decide on the implementation structure and approach, respectively the bodies that can provide the financing (loans, guarantees) to the final recipients.
20. advocates a future CAP that maintains a direct relationship with rural territory areas through the active role of the EU's regions, (…)	The CAP Plans have to address the territorial and regional needs when preparing the Strengths - Weaknesses - Opportunities - Threats (SWOT) analysis, needs assessment and intervention logic. The regional and local authorities need to be involved in the drawing up of the CAP plans and certain elements of the Plan, such as interventions, can be implemented by regional authorities. The Member State should ensure the consistency and interplay of the regional and national interventions. In addition, at least 5% of EAFRD will be ring-fenced for Leader.
Depopulation: 23. urges that criteria be set a criteria to enabling sub-NUTS3 rural areas with depopulation problems to be defined, (…); 24. Suggests, however, that depopulation requires new ways of thinking about rural development which re-envisions shrinkage not as	Demography is a priority of the Commission as proved by the mission letter of President von de Leyen to Vice-president Šuica in which demography has an outstanding role. So far, the Commission has published the 'Report on the Impact of Demographic change'[15], which revealed that rural areas all along the Union suffer from severe population loss. A substantial net

---

14   https://www.fi-compass.eu/esif/eafrd
15   https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/demography_report_2020_n.pdf

a burden, but as a potential positive opportunity;

25. (…) provide new openings to be innovative and modernise governance and public services through more holistic, proactive and place-based strategies;

28. (…) to highlight the rural way of life and counter the cultural and social dominance of the urban way of life, (…);

29. (…) a specific focus should be on the needs of young people to encourage them to stay in rural areas; (…);

31. reiterates its call (…) to be more proactive in encouraging and facilitating the establishment of women in rural areas (…);

population loss rate maintained in time causes depopulation, problem that rural areas in some parts of Europe have been facing. As underlined in the Report on the impact of demographic change, rural areas that suffer from a significant population reduction may experience land abandonment and increased risk of forest fires and it generally becomes harder to attract new investments. The Commission's Green Paper on Ageing[16] published on 27 January 2021 also refers to challenges in rural areas.

The abandonment of the territory is a key challenge for a number of rural areas and it is being considered all along the conception of the Long-term Vision for Rural Areas.

In line with the Report on the Impact of Demographic change, and where necessary, the urban-rural regional typology (regional NUTS-3 level) and Degree of Urbanisation will be used when it comes to demographic changes over time. Most demographic data and indicators (fertility rates, net migration, natural change, time series with age and sex breakdown, projections) are primarily available at NUTS-3 level. Since the NUTS-3 level does not always manage to account for the real demographic situation of the EU territories and of EU rural areas, the Vision will, where possible, downscale these data to the local level to use it by Degree of Urbanisation.

The Vision will also pay special attention to gender issues and their specificities related to rural areas.

As part of the 2021 population and housing censuses in the EU, Eurostat will, for the first time, collect and publish detailed georeferenced data at 1 square kilometre grid for all Member States in line with Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/1799 of 21 November

---

[16] COM(2021) 50 final.

	2018. The new Commission initiative on European statistics on population[17] aims at a new regulatory framework to bring together demographic, migration and census data and ensure greater regional detail.
Green growth: 36. recommends that farmers, stock breeders and foresters be trained and financed to identify opportunities in sustainable management for the environment and marketing-options for their products, supplemented by production in the energy, tourism and carbon storage sectors and local ecosystems. The establishment of co-ops to bring small producers together in all sectors should receive greater support;	The implementation of several Green Deal initiatives (Farm to Fork Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy[18], Circular Economy Strategy[19]) shall foster and support the transition to sustainable agriculture that leaves no-one behind. The future CAP Strategic Plan Regulation will offer many tools and possibilities to support cooperation, notably cooperation among producers but not just, training, sustainable management of resources, as well as to target local needs. The EU Nature Restoration Plan[20] included in the 2030 Biodiversity Strategy adopted by the Commission in May 2020, linked also to the investments in the natural capital under the CAP and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), will provide further job and growth opportunities especially in rural areas and communities, on top of benefits for biodiversity and climate resilience.
Digital Connectivity: 37. (…) rural investment must be prioritised to ensure rural areas have adequate digital connectivity infrastructure, (…) 39. requests that the Recovery and Resilience Facility with a budget of EUR 560 billion invest in more and better connectivity and focus on closing the digital divide.	The Commission considers investments in digital infrastructures a priority for ESIF interventions and the RRF, 20% of which, as a minimum, should support the digital transition. Besides, support for digital connectivity was included in the Rural Development Programmes 2014-2020 of several Member States. The CAP Strategic Plan Regulation proposal provides for a possibility to continue this support in the CAP plans. As mentioned above, the Commission Communication '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade' addresses this issue and includes the objective, by 2030, to have all European households covered by a

---

[17] https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12958-European-statistics-on-population-ESOP
[18] COM(2020) 380 final.
[19] COM(2020) 98 final.
[20] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

	Gigabit Network and all populated areas covered by 5G.
Access to services: 41. highlights that rural communities do have a right for a basic standard of services, such as health services (GP services), the ability to access postal, banking and assurance services in rural areas, political participation and arts and culture;	The erosion of services in rural areas is an important factor in the negative spiral affecting sparsely populated areas. ESIF and the CAP offer possibilities to finance basic services, but improved support mechanisms are called for. These issues will also be addressed in the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas, which will explore how to deploy and develop policies and financing from EU and national sources to retain and restore basic services in rural areas.
Quality of life: 44. (…) economic growth and employment creation are important but need to be complemented by a sufficient supply of good-quality services, housing, education and training, life-long learning and health systems (…) 46. calls for an innovative action plan to address the lack of transport connectivity to rural, mountain, island and outermost regions; (…) 48. (…) to close the gap between urban and rural areas by promoting win-win partnerships in areas such as the environment and energy transition, economic development, quality of services and administrative organisation (…)	The Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas will look into the gaps between rural and urban areas and promote innovative solutions to foster physical and digital connectivity, housing and services. It will also analyse rural mobility and look for sustainable solutions.
Smart rural areas and villages: 53. (…) more flexible support measures for innovation in non-agricultural activities that are integrated and contribute to the primary activity (…), the possibility of supporting development of non-agricultural businesses, which should be included in Article 69 of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation; 54. calls for medium sized rural towns to also have access to urban funding; (…)	The Commission proposal for Article 69 of the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation provides the possibility of supporting non-agricultural businesses when it is part of local development strategies. Discussions are ongoing between the Commission and the European Parliament and the Council including on support to businesses also outside these strategies. However, the CAP alone cannot support all the development needs in rural areas.

N° 5	Strengthening local governance and representative democracy via new digital technology instruments Own-initiative COR-2020-00830 – CIVEX-VII/002 141st plenary session – December 2020 Rapporteur: Rait PIHELGAS (EE/RE) DG CNECT – Commissioner BRETON

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
1. acknowledges that governments and public authorities at all levels are faced with increasingly complex and unprecedented challenges ranging from globalisation, economic development and the impact of technology, through climate and demographic change, to security, disinformation, health issues and radicalisation; 3. welcomes the European Commission's commitment to supporting the green and digital transitions, as this is reflected in its new proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, and the allocation of EUR 8.2 billion to the Digital Europe programme[1];	The Commission welcomes the Committee's opinion, which is in line with and supports the Commission's digital government policy, namely the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020[2] and the living-in.eu initiative[3]. The Committee also shares the recent outlook of the 'Berlin Declaration on Digital Society and Value-based Digital Government'[4], signed on 8 December 2020 by the responsible ministers of all EU Member States and which is an important element for the digital transformation of European societies. The Declaration supports the overall goals of the funding made available under the Multiannual Financial Framework programmes (including Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, Connecting Europe Facility 2, InvestEU, or the shared management programmes). It aligns well with the funding priorities of the main Funding instrument of the Next Generation EU, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in particular with Flagship 'Modernise', which aims at enhancing the digitalisation of public administration and services. The Commission particularly welcomes the focus on the local and regional level of public service provision, as there is a digitalisation gap of currently 12 percentage points when comparing

---

[1]   The EU budget powering the recovery plan for Europe (COM2020 (442) final).
[2]   COM(2016) 179 final.
[3]   Living-in.eu initiative
[4]   https://www.europeandataportal.eu/fr/news/berlin-declaration-digital-society-and-value-based-digital-government

	public services provided at the national and local level.
	The local and regional levels of government are explicitly addressed by the Commission's government interoperability policy[5].
	Also, in its Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'[6], the Commission identified the digitalisation of public services as one of the four 'cardinal points' for mapping the EU's trajectory, as part of a 'Digital Compass' to translate the EU's digital ambitions for 2030 into concrete targets and to ensure that these objectives are met.
	The Communication includes the objective of having, by 2030, 100 % online provision of key public services available for European citizens and businesses, 100 % of European citizens with access to medical records (e-records), and 80 % of citizens using a digital ID solution.
	In the same Communication, the Commission refers to accessible and human-centric digital public services and administration as a principle that could be included in a possible set of digital principles and rights. The Commission will propose to include such a set of principles and rights in an interinstitutional solemn declaration between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. The Commission hopes to achieve decisive progress with the other institutions on such declaration by the end of 2021.
5. reiterates the relevant and contextual positions from the earlier opinions of the Committee: – Opinion Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions, adopted by the Committee	The Commission welcomes the Committee's' re-affirmation of their positive opinion on the principles of the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020. The Commission also agrees with the need for investment in digital skills and training. This is

---

[5] European Interoperability Framework and ISA² Programme, transitioning into the Digital Europe Programme.
[6] COM(2021) 118 final.

of the Regions Plenary on 30 November 2017[7]. The Committee looks at the digitalisation of administration as a means to provide better services to citizens and affirms the key role that LRAs must play in modernising the public sector. It urges the public sector to commit to innovation focused on users' needs and giving indiscriminate access to digital services for everyone and every business and underlines the need for cooperation and exchange of good innovative practices between administrations and across borders.

− Opinion eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020, adopted by the Committee of the Regions Plenary on 11 October 2016[8]. The Committee endorses the principle that "digital" should be the default method used by public administrations for delivering services, and stresses that long-term efforts must be made to increase digital inclusion so that more people can access the infrastructure and acquire skills they need to enjoy the opportunities offered by digitalisation. The Committee recognises that transparent administrations providing data and services openly and securely are important for increasing transparency and efficiency, but at the same time points out the need of high level of protection for certain types of information and personal data. Further, the Committee supports the principle that public administrations' e-government services should be cross-border by default, and stresses that LRAs in border regions can play a crucial role in identifying and developing cross-border services that are relevant, efficient and seamless.

− Opinion A New Skills Agenda for Europe,

indeed the focus of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027, which lays down a strategic and long-term vision on inclusive and effective digital education. This includes the need to properly address the gender gap and provide women and girls across Europe with the competences and skills they need to thrive in the digital economy. Digital skills are also in the focus of the recently adopted Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade' (more information under paragraphs 11-13-29 below).

---

[7] COR-2017-03529-00-00-AC-TRA-EN.docx.
[8] COR-2016-02882-00-01-AC-TRA-EN.docx.

adopted by the Committee of the Regions Plenary on 7 December 2016[9]. The Committee calls for investment in digital skills and training and sees digitalisation as an opportunity to address many educational challenges;	
11. encourages local and regional authorities to put the digital transformation into effect and exploit the full potential of digital technologies to further facilitate citizens' participation in policy- and decision-making. To this end, new digital technologies should be brought to bear that improve the transparency, inclusiveness and responsiveness of the decision-making process, and the trust and dialogue necessary for good governance should be built. It is essential that this be accompanied by teaching of digital skills;	The Commission welcomes the position of the Committee, which is in line and supports the overall goals of the funding made available under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in particular under the Flagship 'Reskilling and Upskilling', to strengthen the digital literacy of pupils, young people and adults, without leaving anyone behind. In addition, Commission's Pact for Skills[10] encourages the development of regional and local partnerships for reskilling and upskilling in industrial ecosystems through multi-stakeholder partnerships.
13. emphasises that citizens' participation should be founded on effective and non-discriminatory access to information and knowledge; points out the need to narrow the digital divide by empowering people through education and training, including education and training on digital skills and media literacy, prioritising digital training programmes for all demographic groups with a special focus on elderly people and other vulnerable or marginalised groups, and expanding training and education to rural and remote areas;	The Commission recognises the importance of citizen empowerment through media and digital literacy[11]. To this end, during 2016-2020, the 'Media Literacy for All' projects have funded European media literacy development, with a focus on digital skills and identifying disinformation. In particular, the European Democracy Action Plan focuses on efforts to strengthen media literacy as indicated in the Audiovisual and Media Action Plan, the Commission will promote the practical application of new media literacy provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive[12] through a media literacy toolbox and guidelines to Member States. This work will continue during the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027 with funding from the Creative Europe programme[13], in particular with a view to
29. calls for funding to be made available across Europe to improve people's digital and media literacy through educational and training programmes for the different levels of school, as	

---

9   COR-2016-04094-00-01-AC-TRA-EN.docx.
10   https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1517&langId=en
11   https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/media-literacy
12   Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive); OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1–24.
13   https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/node_en

well as for local and regional authority staff and office-holders, in order to improve their skills and knowledge of the options available for using and applying modern digital solutions;	prepare for new technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality and the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

The Commission recognises the importance of teaching of digital skills. To this end, the Digital Europe programme[14] will support training opportunities for the future experts in key capacity areas like data and AI, cybersecurity, quantum and high performance computing (HPC) via specialised education programmes and traineeships. It will also invest in upskilling of the existing workforce through short trainings, supporting also the digital crash courses, which will be tailor-made for the upskilling of SMEs in digital areas.

All these opportunities will be made available on the works on the EU digital platform for skills and jobs, launched under Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Telecom. The programme will also support a network of 200 European Digital Innovation Hubs, geographically spread over all regions of the EU that will support SMEs and public sector organisations with the application of modern digital solutions, and will help them to take advantage of the short-term training courses and digital crash courses.[15]

The programme will also address the digital transformation of the education sector in line with the strategic priority of the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027[16] on inclusive and effective digital education. One of its actions specifically foresees in developing guidelines for teachers and educational staff to enhance digital literacy and tackle disinformation and promote digital literacy.

The importance of strengthening governance processes, policy and regulatory frameworks for digitalisation, supporting connectivity, enhancing |

---

[14] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-europe-programme-proposed-eu75-billion-funding-2021-2027
[15] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/sme-strategy-launched-european-commission
[16] https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en

	digital literary skills and entrepreneurship, as well as accelerating the use of eServices is also reflected the Commission's external cooperation activities, as reiterated in the Staff Working Document on Digital4Development[17], the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument[18] and the recently launched Digital4Development Hub[19].
	Most recently, in its Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade' mentioned above, the Commission identified a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals as one of the four 'cardinal points' for mapping the EU's trajectory, as part of a 'Digital Compass' to translate the EU's digital ambitions for 2030 into concrete targets and to ensure that these objectives are met.
	The Communication recalls that the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan includes the objective to increase the share of adults with basic digital skills to 80 % by 2030 and includes the target to increase the number of employed ICT specialists to 20 million by the same year, with convergence between women and men.
	In the same Communication, the Commission refers to universal digital education and skills for people to take an active part in society and in democratic processes as a principle that could be included in a possible set of digital principles and rights. The Commission will propose to include such a set of principles and rights the previously mentioned interinstitutional solemn declaration.
6. stresses that it is not technology that must motivate the digital transformation, but rather that changes must be based on citizens' needs and expectations, to which the most transparent,	The Commission welcomes the Committee's emphasis on participatory processes in the design and implementation of digital public services. This focus is in line with the spirit of the Berlin

---

[17] SWD(2017) 157 final - Digital4Development: mainstreaming digital technologies and services into EU Development Policy.
[18] COM(2018) 460 final.
[19] https://d4dlaunch.eu/ ; https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2321

most inclusive, most user-friendly, most secure and most cost-effective responses have to be developed. This means that the new challenges require changes also at local and regional level, the implementation of which depends not least primarily on the managers' ability to identify those needs and the readiness to implement the most appropriate changes. It is not enough, in a modern democracy, that representative democracy is exercised on a regular basis: the members of the community, interest groups and organisations must be involved constantly. Inclusion and participation lead to better decisions and strengthen democracy, people's sense of community and willingness to do their bit for the development of the region;

7. notes that while traditional relationships between citizens and politicians are changing significantly, a new digital political arena is emerging where new digital technology instruments can help in finding new solutions and response to challenges, foster innovation and economic growth, improve public service delivery, increase citizen participation in new and different ways, improve local governance, and complement and reinforce democracy;

12. reiterates the importance of incorporating citizens' contributions in the decision-making process and ensuring follow-up; stresses that the lack of responsiveness from decision-makers leads to disappointment and distrust and points out that for a functioning local democracy citizens' trust in public authorities is fundamental;

17. warns that social media platforms facilitate the spreading of disinformation, misinformation and hate speech, which can undermine democracy and trust in public

Declaration on Digital Society and Value-Based Digital Government[20] and reflects the call by Member States for provision of human-centric digital services.

User-centricity and co-creation are also at the heart of the Commission's government interoperability support actions. Implementing and enlarging the use of the Once-Only Principle allows focussing on user needs across sectors and borders.

The Commission recognised the harmful effect of disinformation, including misleading or false information, in the 2018 Communication on tackling online disinformation[21], in the Joint

---

[20] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/berlin-declaration-digital-society-and-value-based-digital-government

[21] COM(2018) 236 final.

institutions; calls for more commitment to teaching digital skills and encourages local policy-makers to use existing digital tools, online platforms and media to communicate and engage positively with citizens and other stakeholders;

19. believes that, beyond the profound effects of digitalisation on people's social life and the world of work, education or culture, to name a few, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of factual and up-to-date information and the importance of the communication channels that disseminate it. It has also become clear that local and regional authorities and the public must be able to interact with one another and that appropriate digital tools must be in place to tackle disinformation and misinformation. These tools must always respect people's ability to fully exercise their freedom of expression;

Action Plan against Disinformation[22] and the 2020 Joint Communication on COVID-19 and disinformation[23].

In 2018, as a follow up of the 2018 Communication, certain online platforms and actors from the advertising sector agreed on and signed a self-regulatory Code of Practice on Disinformation[24], committing to a wide range of actions. In September 2020, the Commission published its services' assessment of the Code of Practice[25]. It identified the shortcomings of the current self-regulatory framework for addressing online disinformation.

As a follow up of the Action Plan, the Commission launched in June 2020 the European Digital Media Observatory, which intends to create and support an independent multidisciplinary community, including fact-checkers, academic researchers and other relevant stakeholders, to tackle the phenomenon of disinformation.

On 3 December 2020, the Commission's European Democracy Action Plan[26] announced a more robust approach to countering false and misleading online content.

On 15 December 2020, the Commission proposed the Digital services Act[27] setting the legislative framework for content moderation as well as a set of new obligations of transparency and accountability of platforms. In spring 2021, the Commission will issue guidance on how platforms and other stakeholders should step up their measures to address the shortcomings identified in the assessment of the Code of Practice and create a bridge between the Digital services Act and the new and strengthened Code. The Guidance aims at

---

[22] JOIN(2018) 236 final.
[23] JOIN(2020) 8 final.
[24] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/code-practice-disinformation
[25] SWD(2020) 180 final.
[26] COM(2020) 790 final.
[27] COM(2020) 825 final.

	having the existing Code of Practice evolve towards a co-regulatory instrument under the Digital Services Act. Furthermore, the Commission intends to propose in third quarter of 2021 legislation on transparency of sponsored political content, an important vector for the spread of disinformation.
	The Commission also aims to increase funding for media literacy under the Creative Europe programme. The disinformation phenomenon is also addressed through projects under Erasmus and the European Solidarity Corps as well as in the Erasmus virtual exchange programme. Moreover, one of the actions of the Digital Education Action Plan (DEAP) foresees the development of practical guidelines for teachers and educational staff to enhance digital literacy and tackle disinformation in the field of education and training.
	Concerning the COVID-19 crisis, following the June 2020 Joint Communication 'Tackling COVID-19 disinformation - Getting the facts right'[28], the Commission has setup a monitoring programme under which platforms provides monthly report on the actions taken to curb disinformation related to COVID-19. The monitoring programme is a transparency measure to ensure the public accountability of the signatories of the Code of Practice.
	In all the initiatives described above, the Commission always puts the protection of fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, at the core of its policy.
26. expects that the introduction of various digital practices by local and regional authorities, which could entail a need for significant, one-off investment, will be part of the overall considerations of the new EU budget within the framework of the digital	The Commission shares the Committee's call on Member States for making available the necessary funds to boost the digitalisation of public administrations at the local and regional level, including the investment in digital skills to complement funds made available at European

---

[28] JOIN(2020) 8 final.

transformation;

29. calls for funding to be made available across Europe to improve people's digital and media literacy through educational and training programmes for the different levels of school, as well as for local and regional authority staff and office-holders, in order to improve their skills and knowledge of the options available for using and applying modern digital solutions;

30. recommends that local and regional authorities prioritise the introduction of digital tools in all funds and programmes;

31. calls for funding for digital educational tools and equipment in order to ensure European-wide equal access to quality digital learning and teaching;

level, e.g. through the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

To this end, the Digital Europe programme support to European Digital Government Ecosystem[29] will help accelerate the digital transformation of public administrations by reducing digital administrative barriers, supporting seamless and secure data flows and the digitalisation of economy and society. It will facilitate interoperability as a core enabler of Europe's digital autonomy, and foster the uptake of interoperable cross-border and cross-sector public services in alignment with regulatory requirements.

As highlighted under Action 4 of the revised Digital Education Action Plan published in September 2020, the Commission fully shares the Committee's call on Member States to make the most of EU support and notably national recovery and resilience plans under the Recovery and Resilience Facility), with regard to internet access, purchase of digital equipment and e-learning applications and platforms for schools and in particular for students from disadvantaged groups and for students and educators with disabilities.

---

[29]   https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/igniting-digital-transformation-governments-apis

N°6	A strategy for Europe's digital future and a strategy for data
	COM(2020) 50 final
	COM(2020) 66 final
	COM(2020) 67 final
	COR-2020-02354 – ECON-VII/004
	140th plenary session – October 2020
	Rapporteur: Mark WEINMEISTER (DE/EPP)
	DG CNECT – Commissioner BRETON

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
7. […] importance of individual and pan-European data sovereignty. It is all the more important in view of the EU Court of Justice's judgment of 16 July 2020 (case C-311/18), which invalidated the privacy shield put in place between the European Union and the United States. The Committee therefore calls on the Commission to clarify the effects of this judgment as soon as possible, given the need for businesses to have legally secured data flows beyond the European Union.	The data strategy presents a European way of data governance, which will make sure that individuals and companies stay in control of their data, thus ensuring an increased level of data sovereignty in Europe. On this regard, on 25 November 2020 the Commission adopted the Proposal for a Regulation on European Data Governance[1].
	Thanks to the strategy, more data will become available for the EU economy and society while individuals and companies stay in full control of the data they generate.
	On 12 November 2020, the Commission published a draft implementing decision[2] on standard contractual clauses for the transfer of personal data to third countries pursuant to the EU General Data Protection Regulation, along with its draft set of new Standard Contractual Clauses[3]. Furthermore, the United States Department of Commerce and the Commission have initiated discussions to evaluate the potential for an enhanced EU-U.S. Privacy Shield framework to comply with the judgment.
	The supervisory authorities and the European

---

[1] COM(2020) 767 final.
[2] See https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12741-Commission-Implementing-Decision-on-standard-contractual-clauses-for-the-transfer-of-personal-data-to-third-countries.
[3] See https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12741-Commission-Implementing-Decision-on-standard-contractual-clauses-for-the-transfer-of-personal-data-to-third-countries.

	Data Protection Board (EDPB) created under General Data Protection Regulation[4] are tasked to ensure compliance of business with this judgment. On 11 November 2020, the EDPB published its recommendations[5] regarding supplementary measures in the context of international transfer safeguards such as Standard Contractual Clauses.
59. calls on the Commission to further strengthen Europe's technological independence in key enabling technologies and infrastructures.	The Commission recognises the importance for Europe to become digitally and technologically resilient. The fact that 20% of Member States' investments under the Recovery and Resilience Facility[6], close to €135 billion, will be dedicated to the digital transition also proves that. Thanks to the implementation of the data strategy, the Commission will be able to shape the appropriate toolbox to reduce Europe's strategic dependencies and to enhance its technological and industrial capabilities in strategic value chains.

The Commission has also addressed this issue in its recent Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'[7]. The Commission identified four 'cardinal points' for mapping the EU's trajectory − including secure and performant sustainable digital infrastructures −, as part of a 'Digital Compass' to translate the EU's digital ambitions for 2030 into concrete targets and to ensure that these objectives are met.

In the context of reinforcing EU supply chains, the Commission's proposal for a Council Regulation on establishing the European High |

---

[4] Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation); OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1–88.

[5] European Data Protection Board, Recommendations 01/2020 on measures that supplement transfer tools to ensure compliance with the EU level of protection of personal data: https://edpb.europa.eu/our-work-tools/public-consultations-art-704/2020/recommendations-012020-measures-supplement-transfer_en.

[6] See the Recovery and Resilience Facility website https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

[7] COM(2021) 118 final.

	Performance Computing (EuroHPC) Joint Undertaking[8], adopted in September 2020, will further develop and maintain a competitive ecosystem in Europe contributing to the technological autonomy of the Union in the digital economy. It will foster the development of advanced future computing technologies and architectures and their integration on leading supercomputing systems and by supporting advanced applications optimised for such systems.
	Furthermore, to further strengthen Europe's technological and digital independence, it is vital that there are capabilities in the EU to store and process data according to European rules and standards. All Member States signed a Joint Declaration on Building the next generation cloud for businesses and the public sector in the EU[9], at the informal telecom Council on 15 October 2020. They agreed to work together towards deploying resilient and competitive cloud infrastructure and services across Europe and to cooperate towards a common approach for cloud development and deployment.
	The practical vehicle for bringing the European cloud federation to life will be the European Alliance for Industrial Data and Cloud.
	Recognising the strategic nature of Communication networks (5G and beyond) the Commission has proposed to launch the 'Smart Networks and Services' Joint Undertaking under Horizon Europe. This initiative will support EU leadership in the area of 6G, in which the EU's main trading partners, notably US, Japan, South Korea and China, are already active.
83. calls for a detailed assessment of the impact of the key measures proposed for a fair and competitive economy with regard to the	When proposing new policies and laws, the Commission adheres to the Better Regulation principles[10] in order to focus on the things that

---

[8] COM(2020) 569 final.

[9] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/towards-next-generation-cloud-europe

[10] See European Commission, Better Regulation: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-

European Data Strategy and the ongoing assessment and review of the suitability of EU competition rules, regulatory measures and the industrial strategy […]	really do need to be done by the EU and make sure they are done well. For this reason, before advancing any new proposal, the Commission carries out an impact Assessment[11] to examine whether there is a need for EU action and analyse the possible impacts of available solutions.
85. calls for a comprehensive framework training programme to address the lack of data experts and data literacy in the EU.	The Commission agrees with the Committee that there is a need to address the lack of digital skills, including data literacy in Europe. Therefore, the Commission proposes to update the European Digital Competence Framework for citizens and educators[12] under the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)[13].
	The European Digital Competence framework for Educators maps the skills needed for contemporary teaching, for pedagogical practice, for teachers own professional learning and for equipping their students with digital skills. The updated Framework will include artificial intelligence (AI) and data-related competences and will raise awareness on AI's opportunities and challenges for education and training.
	The Digital Education Action Plan will also include ethical guidelines in teaching and learning for educators as well as a training programme for researchers and students on the ethical aspects of AI, including a target of 45% of female participation in the training activities.
	Advanced digital skills development will also be incentivised through scaling up the Digital Opportunity traineeships[14] by extending them to

proposing-law/better-regulation-why-and-how_en.

[11] See European Commission, Impact Assessments: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/impact-assessments_en.

[12] See digital competence framework for citizens, with eight proficiency levels and examples of use. https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/digcomp-21-digital-competence-framework-citizens-eight-proficiency-levels-and-examples-use The EDSC will be supported by a self-assessment.

[13] See European Commission, Digital Education Plan: https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en.

[14] See European Commission, Digital Opportunity Traineeships initiative exceeds original targets: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/digital-opportunity-traineeships-initiative-exceeds-original-targets#:~:text=The%20Digital%20Opportunity%20Traineeships%20(DOT,for%20students%20and%20recent%20graduates.&text=Students%20apply%20through%20their%20universities,contacts%20with%20universities'%20career%20offices.

	Vocational Education and Training (VET) learners and apprentices, and offering professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers and other educational staff in school, VET, adult and higher education.
	Finally, the Action Plan will feature a measure to propose a Council recommendation on improving the provision of digital skills in education and training. This will include a focus on inclusive high-quality computing education (informatics) at all levels of education. Introducing pupils to computing from an early age, through innovative and motivating approaches to teaching, in both formal and non-formal settings, can help develop skills in problem-solving, creativity and collaboration. It can also foster interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) related studies and future careers while tackling gender stereotypes.
86. calls […] for support programmes for start-ups and businesses, as otherwise the data strategy cannot be implemented.	The Recovery and Resilience Facility, together with Horizon Europe and Digital Europe programmes as well as structural and investment funds, will create opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the data economy, to have better access to data and to develop new services and applications based on data, inter alia through incubation schemes.
87. calls for an initiative to strengthen technological sovereignty (e.g. development of dedicated processors, network components) in order to be able to safely build and operate the infrastructure required and calls for ensuring adequate funding for European research and development projects.	To ensure the functioning of the European data spaces, which is the main aim of the data strategy, the EU has to invest in next-generation technologies and infrastructures as well as in digital competences like data literacy. This in turn will increase Europe's technological sovereignty in key enabling technologies and infrastructures for the data economy.
	The Commission has also addressed this issue in its recent Communication on '2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade'[15]. One of the objectives set out by that

---

[15] COM(2021) 118 final.

Communication is that, by 2030, the production of cutting-edge and sustainable semiconductors in Europe, including processors, is at least 20% of world production in value (meaning manufacturing capacities below 5nm nodes aiming at 2nm and ten times more energy efficient than today).

The Commission will use a mix of policy measures and EU funding programmes to strengthen Europe's technological sovereignty. In the period 2021-2027, under the Digital Europe Programme and the Connecting Europe Facility 2 (CEF), the Commission plans to invest €2 billion in a High Impact Project on European data spaces and federated cloud infrastructures. The project will fund infrastructures, data-sharing tools, architectures and governance mechanisms for thriving data-sharing and artificial intelligence ecosystems. It will be based on the European federation of energy-efficient and trustworthy edge and cloud infrastructures.

The Commission's proposal for a Council Regulation on EuroHPC Joint Undertaking[16] also includes a significant budget from the above mentioned funding programmes to expand and deploy in the EU a world-class supercomputing and data infrastructure and to provide secure cloud-based services for the European public data space, among other objectives.

Interinstitutional discussions on these programmes are ongoing.

As mentioned above, the Commission has proposed to launch the 'Smart Networks and Services' Joint Undertaking under Horizon Europe.

---

[16] See footnote 4.

N°7	Economic Governance Review COM(2020) 55 final COR-2020-01370 – ECON-VII/005 141st plenary Spesssion – December 2020 Rapporteur: Elio DI RUPO (BE/PES) DG ECFIN – Commissioner GENTILONI

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
11. insists that national, regional and local governments and the public should be able to clearly understand the rules to be applied. To that end, the applicable rules must be based on indicators that are directly verifiable and that incorporate cyclically adjusted countercyclical stabilisation.	Shared fiscal rules are essential for the stability of our economies and the euro area. The rules themselves and their application have evolved considerably over time with the view to take into account the macroeconomic developments and country-specific situations. The many refinements resulted in a framework that is perceived as too complex and difficult to communicate. The Commission agrees that a simpler framework and implementation could contribute to increased ownership, better communication, and lower political costs for enforcement and compliance. The current framework heavily relies on variables that are not directly observable (such as the output gap) and that are frequently revised, which hampers predictability and ownership. To some extent, these shortcomings have been addressed through a stronger focus on the expenditure benchmark, which provides more stable and operational policy guidance by focussing on budgetary items directly under the control of governments. Sub-national governments are very often subject to rules set out in national legislation. Whereas in most Member States, central authorities interact with sub-national authorities more actively during the budgetary process, in some Member States sub-national authorities are not so actively involved. While the allocation of budgetary policy competence across different levels of national administrations is a matter for the national

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>authorities to establish, good coordination is key to ensure efficient and high quality expenditure.

The Commission has recently provided additional guidance on the Communication 'One year since the outbreak of COVID-19: fiscal policy response[1]', adopted in March 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. also believes that economic governance must strike a balance between indicators related to budgetary discipline and non-budgetary indicators. The Committee believes that, in keeping with the macroeconomic imbalance procedure (MIP), which encompasses more varied indicators, including unemployment rates, a reformed economic governance must take into account the greater need for investment and the public spending required to support transition in the key sectors of health, food, transport, digital technology and energy, including improving the energy efficiency of buildings. Some of this spending will have to be covered by national budgets to supplement private and EU funding. And there will also be pressure on public spending in adapting the economy to continuing climate change or cushioning the social impact of higher carbon taxes.</td>
<td>The European Semester is already supported by a comprehensive list of indicators and by scoreboards targeted towards an integrated surveillance and coordination of policies at EU level. Over time, various indicators have been included to take a broader perspective. For example, the inclusion of labour market indicators in the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) Scoreboard has helped to better take into account labour market adjustment linked to imbalances.

The Commission finds it important to allow such tools to remain sufficiently targeted and not to dilute their underlying focus. However, the Commission shares the importance of having an integrated analysis of indicators where synergies and trade-offs between objectives are properly considered.

In this regard, the needs for investment and other public spending to support transitions and adaptations towards a sustainable economy have received increasing attention in the context of the European Semester, taking into account fiscal sustainability and the quality of public finances.

The Commission presented on 4 March 2021 the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan[2], which puts forward three new EU-level headline targets to be achieved by 2030. These targets, centred on employment, skills and inclusion, succeed to the Europe 2020 targets and are aligned with the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. [They are consistent with the Commission's overarching strategic objectives for</td>
</tr>
</table>

---

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/1_en_act_part1_v9.pdf
[2] https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23696&langId=en

	the green and digital transformation and give a common purpose for action in support of upward social convergence and greater economic and social resilience in the EU.] To monitor progress towards the targets, the Commission has also put forward a proposal to revise the Social Scoreboard.
	The Commission fully acknowledges the importance for the fiscal surveillance framework to pay sufficient attention to the quality of public finances, including the role of public investment, as a necessary condition for supporting sustainable economic growth and for long-term sustainability.
13. agrees with the criticism against using "potential GDP" as an indicator, potential GDP being the output capacity that can be realised by fully utilising the productive capital stock and labour supply without creating inflationary pressure. This concept ignores both energy as a factor of production, including the risk of productive capital becoming obsolescent sooner due to restrictions on the use of carbon-based energy, and the physical limits on expanding human activities.	While 'potential GDP' is a comprehensive indicator of the aggregate supply side capacity of an economy, it also poses some challenges since it is not directly observable. In calculating potential gross domestic product (GDP), the Commission does not apply its own methodology, but uses a commonly agreed methodology, designed and agreed with the Member States and endorsed by the ECOFIN Council. The Commission is currently working with the Member States to improve further this methodology. In the context of those consultations, the Commission is open to exploring the implications of adapting the current definition of potential output to address the issues raised by the Committee, including the suggestion to include energy as a factor of production.
16. again suggests that the MIP be extended to auxiliary indicators relating to regional disparities. The Committee thinks that it could more fully take into account the progress made in the implementation of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that cover not only environmental protection but also social, economic and governance criteria.	Regional developments are considered in the context of surveillance under the European Semester. The same is true for developments reflected under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MIP is conducted in this context with a particular focus on assessing risks for the macroeconomic stability of the economy of a Member State or of the economic and monetary union or the EU as a whole. In this assessment, regional, environmental

	or social developments that create significant risks to macroeconomic stability are relevant. However, it is important that the scoreboard, including its auxiliary indicators, remains focused on the MIP objectives set in the legal provisions.
22. considers that the establishment of a "golden rule of public investment" in the European economic governance framework could prove a useful tool to end the adverse effects of current budgetary rules by eventually excluding net public investment from deficit calculations in the SGP, which would not only preserve public investment during crises but would also discourage the extreme underinvestment (negative net public investment) that some Member States suffer from by penalising it. This measure could be applied as a priority to public investment in projects aimed at encouraging the transition to a sustainable society in environmental, economic and social terms, as defined in the SDGs and the Green Deal, as these investments are recognised as particularly important not only with regard to the recovery following the COVID-19 crisis, but also for the prosperity and quality of life of future generations. The CoR also advocates investing in human capital and skills to facilitate the transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy fit for the digital age.	The Commission agrees with the Committee on the crucial role which investment will have to play in engineering a sustained recovery process in the post COVID-19 period, and notably the environmental and digital transition in a context of elevated public debt. The implementation of reforms and investment under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)[4] will provide a substantial impulse to the economy. Ensuring high-quality public investment projects will be instrumental for the RRF implementation and for the overall improvement of public finances to support the recovery.
23. calls on the Commission to present a white paper on an overhaul of economic governance based on the potential establishment of such a golden rule[3], after it has reformulated its proposals to take account of the economic and budgetary damage caused by COVID-19. The Commission should in its assessment also consider other instruments such as an	In light of the low level of public investment, of elevated public debt and of the challenges posed by climate change and digitalisation, the Commission's review of the EU fiscal rules raised the question on the role for the EU surveillance framework in incentivising Member States to undertake key reforms and investments needed to help tackle today and tomorrow's economic, social, and environmental challenges while preserving safeguards against risks to debt sustainability.

The framework should be consistent with these challenges, keeping in mind that all public spending needs to be ultimately financed. It needs discussion what is the appropriate role of the EU surveillance framework in promotion of a composition of public finances conducive to sustainable growth and for Member States to sustain adequate levels of investment, and more |

---

3 Benefits and drawbacks of an 'expenditure rule', as well as of a 'golden rule', in the EU fiscal framework. European Parliament study -
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/645732/IPOL_STU(2020)645732_EN.pdf

4 COM(2020) 408 final.

expenditure rule, which on the basis of trend economic growth and the level of debt imposes a limit on the annual growth of total government expenditure, and can serve to safeguard public trust by boosting transparency, reducing administrative burdens and striking a balance between budgetary discipline and preserving sufficient capacity for public investment.	generally of productive spending.
24. stresses that economic governance, which is implemented in practice through the European Semester coordination cycle, lacks efficiency and effectiveness in terms of carrying out reforms. The scope of the reforms considered under the European Semester has never been defined in EU legal texts, particularly with regard to their relevance and their added value at EU level. This lack of definition limits potential interactions between reforms undertaken at national level and EU policies (financial legislation and programmes) and is problematic with regard to the principle of subsidiarity. The Committee agrees with the European Commission that, in future, emphasis must be placed on the environmental aspect of Member States' social, economic, budgetary and employment policies, in accordance with the European Green Deal.	The European Semester has been a key tool for effective coordination of national economic and employment policies for a decade now. It is a strong partnership between the Commission, the Member States and the Council, focusing on the priorities of the Member States and the European Union to carry out structural reforms while investing in a green and sustainable future. The fact that around 70% of the country-specific recommendations have seen at least 'some' progress since 2011 is a qualified success. This confirms that important reforms are being carried out, though some may take long time given their complexity, wide scope and the need for consensus building among many stakeholders. This also demonstrates the stringent monitoring of the reforms by the Commission and justifies the efforts to improve implementation. Over time, the Commission has taken several steps to improve dialogue with the European Parliament and to strengthen ownership of the Member States to boost implementation. Efforts will continue using new instruments associated to the European Semester, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility.
26. firmly believes that its proposed code of conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities in the European Semester[5] is still likely to rectify this lack of efficiency and effectiveness as local and regional realities	The Commission agrees that regional and local authorities are important partners in the implementation of reforms and investments. In that regard, they should be appropriately consulted and involved, in accordance with the national

---

[5] CoR (2017) opinion: 'Improving the governance of the European Semester: a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities' – rapporteur: Rob Jonkman (NL/ECR), adopted on 11 May 2017.

would be better taken into account, and that it still needs to be implemented, especially as the European Semester has provided guidelines for cohesion policy since 2019, the management of which is shared between all levels of government.	legal frameworks. The Commission has invited Member States to properly engage with all stakeholders within the context of the European Semester. In this context, the National Reform Programme[6] has become a very important tool for Member States to facilitate inter-ministerial and inter-regional coordination in the reform process to secure commitment to reform implementation amongst the different ministries, regional and local authorities and with other stakeholders. Looking forward, the Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation also contains specific provisions to ensure close cooperation between those responsible for implementation of reforms and investments at national and, where appropriate, at the regional level.
27. encourages the European Commission to promote an examination of administrative capacity and tax decentralisation in the Member States with a view to verifying that the tasks entrusted to local and regional authorities are in keeping with the human, technical and financial resources at their disposal, while respecting the Member States' constitutions and the principle of subsidiarity.	The Commission shares the view that adequate administrative capacity is an important prerequisite for successful reform implementation. Therefore, since 2011 it has proposed a large number of country-specific recommendations in this field to increase and improve the capacity, quality and effectiveness of the public administration in general or specific areas within the public administration (e.g. the judiciary), including at different government levels.
29. welcomes the inclusion of climate protection in the European Semester and expects it to provide both clear monitoring and an assessment of the effectiveness of climate protection measures, so that national progress in implementing Semester targets becomes more tangible.	The Commission is committed to steer the economic agenda to support the achievement of climate neutrality by 2050. In this context, the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021 stressed the need that all national recovery and resilience plans will need to focus strongly on both reforms and investments supporting the green transition. To follow the commitment of the European Council to achieve a climate mainstreaming target

---

6   https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester/european-semester-timeline/national-reform-programmes-and-stability-or-convergence-programmes_en

	of 30% for both the multiannual financial framework and Next Generation EU, each recovery and resilience plan will include a minimum of 37% of expenditure related to climate.
	Furthermore, the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) lies at the heart of the policymaking on internal and external action across all sectors.
	Integrated in the 2020 European Semester's surveillance framework, the Commission regularly monitors the SDG implementation in the EU based on a reference indicator framework. The EU SDG indicators have been chosen both for their policy relevance for the EU and their statistical quality. The indicator set is reviewed annually and presents an overview on Member States' status and progress towards the SDGs. In its forthcoming edition in May 2021, the report will contain a first assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable development in the EU.
	This effort complements the relevant EU climate and energy policies that have been or are being revised in the context of the European Green Deal[7] and in particular, the 2030 European Climate target plan adopted in September 2020[8]. In this context, the governance of the energy union and climate action will in particular monitor the achievement of the sectoral climate and energy targets for 2030.
31. supports a reform of the Eurogroup, whose status needs to be put on a formal footing and updated with a view to a fully-fledged presidency, greater accountability to the European Parliament and more transparent proceedings, starting with publication of all minutes in detail.	The Eurogroup plays a role in safeguarding credibility of the euro, promoting reforms, policies at the euro area level and coordinating national ones. A stronger Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) can only happen if Member States accept to share more competences and decisions on euro area matters, within a common legal

---

[7]   COM(2019) 640 final.
[8]   COM(2020) 562 final.

	framework.
33. believes that work must continue on resolving the euro area difficulties by re-establishing sound public finances, creating a robust banking system, moving towards Fiscal Union and stimulating sustainable economic growth.	The 2021 Commission recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area[9] underlines that the completion of the EMU architecture remains essential to further increase the euro area's stability and resilience. It also recommends that euro area Member States take action ensuring policy stance that supports recovery, further improving convergence, resilience and sustainable and inclusive growth, strengthening national institutional frameworks, and ensuring macro-financial stability.

---

[9] COM(2020) 746 final.

N°8	**Opportunities and synergies of a precautionary adaptation to climate change to promote sustainability and quality of life in regions and municipalities – which framework conditions are required for this?** **Presidency referral** **COR-2020-03121 – ENVE-VII/010** **141st plenary session – December 2020** **Rapporteur: Markku MARKKULA (FI/EPP)** **DG CLIMA – First Vice President TIMMERMANS**

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
2. highlights the importance of cities and regions playing an active role, joining forces with local and international industry to adapt to and mitigate climate change by adopting increasingly ambitious and realistic targets, and stresses that it is essential to accelerate action across all relevant EU policies, increase adaptation financing, jointly develop suitable adaptation methods and instruments, step up cross-border cooperation and exchanges of experience and best practices, and enhance resilience and adaptation capacities, nature-based solutions and opportunities for innovation.	In the next programming period of 2021-2027, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management will be a key priority for Cohesion Policy. It is likely that, compared with the current period, investments in climate change adaptation related areas would increase given that the related specific objective is included under the thematic concentration requirement. Overall, in the next long-term EU budget, at least 30% of the European Regional Development Fund and 37% of the Cohesion Fund investments will contribute to climate objectives. In the next programming period of 2021-2027, the Commission also proposed to increase the compulsory urban earmarking to 6% of the European Regional Development Fund at the national level. This funding share must be directed to priorities and projects selected by cities based on their sustainable urban development strategies that can include adaptation to climate change. The urban earmarking is now expected to be increased to 8% based on the preliminary compromise of the co-legislators. Investments in nature-based solutions are encouraged across different investment areas of Cohesion Policy.
5. stresses that the EU's climate adaptation	The Commission agrees on the integrated

and mitigation policies need to be better integrated with both public and private sectors, as well as with citizens' activities within EU climate policy sectors: the emissions trading system (ETS), the effort sharing decision (ESD), and land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF).

To achieve climate neutrality by 2050, EU must accelerate the decarbonisation of activities across all sectors. Cities and regions, in partnership with industry, have primary responsibility for the ESD sector, especially heating, cooling, land use and transport.

approach and shares the Committee's opinion.

The Commission is developing tools and solutions to help to meet the rising need for action and awareness of climate impacts by public administrations, citizens (mainly by engagement in the Climate Pact), businesses (non-financial risk disclosure obligations and the Sustainable Finance Taxonomy[1]).

The Commission also agrees on the need to accelerate the decarbonisation of cities and regions. The Commission will support access to solutions to adaptation and mitigation. In particular, Horizon Europe is to test integrated solutions that address the complex transformation needed for the 2050 climate-resilience vision in view of maximising the prospects for scaling up with emphasis on cross-border cooperation. The cohesion policy will further reinforce funding to accelerate the decarbonisation.

6. considers that subnational governments need to play a crucial role in enhancing the global climate ambition, and that adaptation policies should play a fundamental role in the localisation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the EU needs to create incentives for the municipalities to achieve the SDGs.

In line with the UN's New Urban Agenda, the Commission agrees to reinforce support to cities and regions. This will include progressing on the adaptation commitments under the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, promoting sustainable and resilient urbanisation, supporting community engagement in planning and implementation, special attention to informal settlements, and channelling financial resources to the local level.

The Commission welcomes the proposed support in cooperating with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to strengthen the visibility and recognition of subnational governments in global climate diplomacy and activities.

The Commission has also developed a European Handbook on SDG Voluntary Local Reviews

---

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/banking-and-finance/sustainable-finance/eu-taxonomy-sustainable-activities_en

	helping the municipalities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and monitor progresses as well as sustain the transformative and inclusive action towards SDGs.
9. urges the Commission to develop the new EU Adaptation Strategy with clear goals and indicators in line with the principles of active subsidiarity and proportionality;	The Commission proposes more ambitious series of proactive measures to deal with the nexus between hazard, exposure and vulnerability. With the new strategy, the Commission will facilitate the establishment of a toolbox for Europe to become more climate-resilient. Adaptation action is an opportunity for sustainable growth and individual empowerment. At the governmental and corporate levels, the Recovery and Resilience Facility[2] provides an opportunity to frontload investments that can help to build back better. In view of the new Adaptation Strategy the Commission will integrate climate resilience in macro-fiscal policy and will engage in discussions with Member States on the possibility to better take into account climate change in national fiscal processes.
14. notes that local preparedness related to climate adaptation differs globally and also in Europe. Climate risks are currently not extensively included in the overall risk management and preparedness planning of municipalities.	The Commission will support the strengthening of planning and implementation of subnational adaptation policies and actions in critical sectors, including through the EU and Global Covenant of Mayors. The Commission will pilot a Policy Support Facility to assist local and regional authorities under the EU Covenant of Mayors. This Facility will provide direct technical assistance to local and regional authorities with the development and implementation of their adaptation strategies and plans.
20. calls on the Commission to create and increase the use of European-wide	The goal of the new Adaptation Strategy is to increase awareness and climate action to support

---

2   COM(2020) 408 final.

collaboration instruments to co-create new solutions to climate challenges, and calls for digital virtual coaching teams and peer-to-peer mentoring to support new, innovative, regional and local sustainable development; regions and cities are willing to serve as testbeds to develop new solutions that can address the diverse needs of EU territories.	sustainable development at local level (education, skills development, and behavioural change). The EU Covenant of Mayors will continue to support local actors in peer-to-peer mentoring. The EU programmes and funds continue to create and support new instruments to co-create solutions to climate challenges and facilitate the scale up and experience sharing.
32. recommends that the EEA, together with various expert organisations such as the Joint Research Centre, the Climate Adaptation Partnership of the Urban Agenda and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, provide regular updates on scientific knowledge and showcase specific projects relating to climate change, impacts and vulnerability in the main biogeographical regions in Europe.	The Commission also believes in the power and impact of showcasing specific projects and sharing scientific climate related knowledge. In particular, members of the Covenant of Mayors share best practises to encourage outreach and implementation in regions in Europe. In addition, the Commission supports synergies under the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) and EU funding, for instance a good practise from Italy on bonus points, which were allocated to projects presented by municipalities with an approved CoM action plan uploaded on the portal of the Covenant of Mayors. The Commission would like to explore joining forces with the Committee in outreach and scale up of good practices across all European regions where appropriate. The Commission would also like to draw attention to the European Environment Agency (EEA) assessment report presenting the status quo of adaptation to climate change at the local government level, with particular focus on cities. The assessment presents the overview of climate risks to cities, types of adaptation responses, extent of adaptation planning and actions at the local level in Europe and opportunities to scale up and speed up implementation of adaptation to climate change at the local level.[3] The Commission also continues to support the Urban Agenda of the EU, and in particular, the

---

[3] https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/urban-adaptation-in-europe

	Climate Adaptation Partnership of the Urban Agenda. This Partnership has implemented important actions such as training academies of local politicians on climate adaptation.
34. requests urgent measures at the Arctic where the winter temperatures are already 2.5°C higher than pre-industrial temperatures, meaning that sea ice and snow melt at an unprecedented rate as proven lately e.g. by the MOSAiC Expedition. Special attention is needed due to the Arctic's greater sensitivity – referred to as "polar amplification".	The Commission shares the views to act on arctic sea-ice loss urgently. Hence, the Commission embeds the support of the development of adaptation action in regional cooperation fora, such as regional fisheries management organisations and agreements, and notably the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, in the new proposed Adaptation Strategy.
36. stresses that climate change is strongly linked to socio-economic changes such as urbanisation; highlights that Europe's urban areas, where three quarters of the population live, face climate challenges that need tailored solutions and support from the EU and the Member States; underlines also the importance of rural and peri-urban areas where it is sometimes even more difficult to cut emissions therefore calls for appropriate solutions there as well.	Under 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy, the Commission will continue to provide place-based support to cities of all sizes, including small and medium-sized cities and functional urban areas. The focus on functional urban areas and promotion of urban-rural linkages will also be central for the novel instrument European Urban Initiative that will be established under Cohesion Policy.
38. stresses the crucial role of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and similar initiatives in bringing adaptation policies closer to cities and regions, and that of Covenant Signatories in implementing the Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans.	The Commission agrees on the essential role of the Covenant of Mayors in bringing adaptation policies closer to cities and regions. The Commission continues to support the strengthening of the impact through the increased dissemination of good practice examples, the upscaling of city-to-city cooperation and the reinforcement of synergies with other relevant initiatives. The Commission looks forward to the contribution of the 'Committee of the Regions Covenant Ambassadors' in this area.
41. highlights the importance of increasing European partnerships between regions and cities using the Smart Specialisation concepts;	Smart specialisation strategies allow teaming up regions and their innovation actors around shared research and innovation priorities, match their

recommends increasing the role of cities and regions in the Climate Adapt platform and is keen to deepen cooperation especially with the European Environment Agency, the EIT Climate KIC and the Joint Research Centre;	capacities and strengths, and speed up innovation along value chains. Smart Specialisation Platform and its thematic sections allow regions to join forces and pool resources on the basis of matching smart specialisation priorities. In the next period, Cohesion Policy will launch a new instrument for interregional innovation investments to facilitate this.
42. points out the need to improve the implementation capacities of regions and cities and the importance of having enough staff, including skilled staff. Especially at the municipal level, the necessary work force must be systematically provided for the coordination of the many fields of work and areas of responsibility associated with the implementation of sustainable development goals and climate action goals.	The Commission agrees on the importance of capacity-building in cities and regions and aims to continue strengthening it through the task force on capacity building under the Covenant of Mayors as well as under technical assistance funding of cohesion policy. In the next programming period of 2021-2027, the European Urban Initiative will be established under Cohesion Policy that supports cities in a number of ways. For example, it will improve capacities of cities in the design of sustainable urban policies and practices in an integrated and participative way. The initiative will also provide support to the implementation of sustainable urban strategies.
47. suggests promoting long-term EU-funded adaptation-related infrastructure investment; stresses the importance of having adequate funding opportunities for climate adaptation for all levels of government, as well as exploring potential new options for existing facilities and looking into new and innovative solutions.	Cohesion Policy is one of the most important funding sources in climate change adaptation and risk prevention and management. In the current period, nearly €8 billion of investments are planned in this area. Adding the national co-financing brings the total investment to nearly €10 billion. The bulk of these investments goes into the prevention of and preparedness for natural disasters such as floods, forest fires, coastal erosion, earthquakes and drought. In the next programming period of 2021-2027, in the context of the European Urban Initiative, Cohesion Policy will continue providing support for cities for testing and experimenting with novel innovative solutions, including in the area of adaptation to climate change.
48. recommends that EU and national	Cohesion Policy supports climate change

governments ensure stable and systematic public financing for adaption, such as for public utilities, emergency and rescue services, and healthcare. Precautionary adaptation calls for comprehensive investment in infrastructure and rescue instruments that integrate climate adaptation and mitigation into overall sustainability measures;	adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience. These are not isolated activities in Cohesion Policy, but are linked to other fields of support and to national and local activities. This mainstreaming of risk prevention and climate change adaptation is strengthened by the promotion of the sustainable development principle. In addition, risk prevention, disaster resilience and climate change adaptation are integrated into other cohesion policy funding priorities, such as innovation, energy efficiency and water management.
50. acknowledges that the new 2021-2027 framework will focus heavily on a smarter Europe through innovation and on a greener, carbon-free Europe; calls for a bigger role for the Committee in guiding the use of the mix of instruments for regional public-private investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation; this includes supporting locally-led strategies and empowering local authorities in the management of EU, national, regional and local funds; points out that the European programmes need to promote creating and sharing good climate solutions for the benefit of municipalities of different sizes.	The development of the next generation programmes are currently ongoing. Each programme will be developed through a collective process involving authorities at European, regional and local level, social partners and organisations from civil society. This partnership and multi-level governance applies to all stages of the programming process, from design, through management and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. This approach ensures that actions are adapted to local and regional needs and priorities. A new crosscutting 'Policy Objective 5 – A Europe closer to citizens' has also been included in the main policy framework of 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy. It is focused on the territorial perspective and aims to support tailor-made investment strategies at territorial level, in cities and local communities to address their diverse challenges, and tapping into their development potentials, including in the area of adaptation to climate change. This support will have to be implemented through integrated sustainable development strategies drawn up at the relevant level, and the local and territorial authorities will have to be involved in the selection of operations to guarantee a participative process.

	In line with this, the Commission welcomes the pro-active engagement of the Committee in this process.
54. points out that the objectives of the Climate Pact rely on active subsidiarity and multilevel governance: the Committee stands ready to provide its political support in the implementation of the Climate Pact and bring it to all cities and regions of Europe. In this ambit, it calls on the Commission to include adaptation action as one of the interventions for this important initiative.	The Commission welcomes the support of the Committee in the implementation of the Climate Pact.

Climate action brings many benefits and we need everyone on board to foster cooperation with society at large to take commitments and act collectively.

It will aim to give everyone a voice and space to share information, design new climate actions (adaptation & mitigation), and showcase and support solutions that others can follow. |
| 58. highlights that several initiatives, such as Citizen Dialogues, Territorial Impact Assessments, Multilevel Energy and Climate Dialogues and the RegHub network as well as the European Urban Initiative of the post-2020 cohesion policy, can support both the assessment of adaptation action and strategic agenda setting, by involving those directly impacted by climate change and adaptation measures. | The knowledge and policy development strand of the European Urban Initiative under the post-2020 cohesion policy will build a knowledge base in support of better policy design and implementation, including in the area of adaptation to climate change, and will ensure easier access to thematic knowledge and share knowhow on sustainable urban development to cities of all sizes. |

N°9	The European Commission report on the implementation of the renewed strategic partnership with the EU's outermost regions
	COM(2020) 104 final
	COR-2020-03319-03319 – COTER-VII/007
	141st plenary session – December 2020
	Rapporteur: Ángel Víctor TORRES PÉREZ (ES/PES)
	DG REGIO – Commissioner FERREIRA

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
4. regrets, however, that the Report does not constitute an in-depth assessment of the strategy for these regions, or an opportunity to remedy the omission of a number of measures in policies that are essential to their development, such as cohesion policy and, in particular, the EU's social pillar.	The purpose of the Report was to review progress made in implementing the Communication 'A stronger and renewed strategic partnership with the EU outermost regions'[1].

The Report presents actions undertaken by the Commission, the outermost regions and the respective Member States in the sectors set out in the Communication, including through cohesion policy instruments, highlighting achievements, and suggests areas in which further implementation efforts are needed. |
| 5. recognises the need to adapt this strategy in the light of the serious consequences of the COVID19 pandemic, which have had a greater impact on these regions as they are heavily dependent on tourism and on their connectivity with other parts of the world, meaning that economic recovery is expected to take longer. | The Commission is keen to support the outermost regions in recovering from the COVID-19 crisis; and can support their recovery path within the existing Communication on a strategic partnership with the outermost regions and in line with Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

One of the Communication's key objective is to support growth and jobs. In the crisis context, the Commission is supporting recovery and jobs with measures under cohesion, agriculture, fisheries and State aid policies, including a dedicated amount for these regions under REACT-EU[2] in addition to their share of national allocations.

Other objectives relate to climate action, circular economy, clean energy, blue economy, digital and |

---

[1] COM(2020) 104 final.
[2] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/coronavirus-response/react-eu

	transport connectivity, which remain key for these regions and their path towards sustainable recovery.

The Commission has also commissioned a study to ascertain the impact of the crisis on the outermost regions and its results will help tailor response and further guide the implementation of the strategy for these regions. |
| 6. underlines the need to support the outermost regions' industrial sector in the current circumstances, and the key role of an appropriate European State aid framework and of fiscal instruments in kick-starting business competitiveness and promoting job creation in these regions. | The Industrial strategy of March 2020[3] stresses the need to revitalise EU regions, developing clusters to facilitate cooperation between businesses, investors, universities and research centres and to encourage partnerships involving local industries through thematic smart specialisation platforms. The Commission intends to support regional transformation via smart specialisation strategies and cohesion policy Funds.

The outermost regions' specific structural, economic and social situation is recognized for State aid purposes in Article 107(3)(a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, allowing Member States to design ambitious and flexible support schemes to address the challenges encountered by local undertakings. The current State aid framework, including the General Block Exemption Regulation[4], takes into account outermost regions' situation. Exceptional rules apply to operating and investment aids in all sectors, in addition to specific aid schemes. The Commission maintained these exceptional rules and took into account the outermost regions' specificities in the review of adopted new Regional State aid guidelines, that will apply as from 2022.

In March 2020, the Commission adopted a Temporary Framework[5] to support the economy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has adjusted it to the evolving needs of undertakings. |

---

[3] COM(2020) 102 final.
[4] Commission Regulation (EC) No 800/2008 of 6 August 2008 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the common market in application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty (General block exemption Regulation); OJ L 214, 9.8.2008, p. 3–47.
[5] C(2020) 1863 final.

	This Framework gives Member States the possibility to address specific needs, including those of undertakings in the outermost regions, with much flexibility, with a view to ensuring undertakings' liquidity and access to finance, to ensure their economic viability, protect jobs and provide incentives to invest despite the difficult context. The Temporary Framework has been prolonged until 31 December 2021[6].
7. notes that social issues have always been at the heart of the challenges facing the ORs, exacerbated by the devastating effects of the current crisis on their labour markets, which heightens the need to place growth and employment at the heart of any strategy for these regions. The ORs need a new approach that includes a stronger social dimension and the identification of specific measures to address the current situation.	The Commission is following the outermost regions situation closely; and is aware of the severe impact of the crisis on these regions, which already had particularly high unemployment before the crisis. The Commission has adopted measures that extend the flexibility to use the Structural and Investment Funds and simplifies their management. The European Structural and Investment Funds – in particular the European Social Fund (ESF) – already offer numerous possibilities to invest in employment and social inclusion.

The Commission proposed to adapt the future EU social funding programmes to address key social and employment challenges, i.e. the rise in youth unemployment, the need to target food and material aid to the most deprived, the risk of child poverty. The priority is to overcome quickly the social and economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The European Pillar of Social Rights[7] is the reference point for action, with its ambition to build a robust social model resistant to shocks, and that fosters upward social convergence and the highest protective standards.

The political agreement reached between co-legislators on the European Social Fund Plus for the 2021-2027 programming period (ESF+) |

6   https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_261
7   COM(2017) 250 final;
    https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

	safeguards the highest co-financing rates for the outermost regions; sets up a specific additional allocation to support employment, education, inclusion and meet the specific challenges in these regions; and earmarks 12.5% of funding in the outermost regions to improve youth employment.

The ESF+ will support citizens in the outermost regions through reinforced and adapted social support, participation in re-socialisation activities, material aid and assistance in healthcare, housing, education and administrative services. The ESF+ will also ensure support in the form of food aid to the most deprived. Specific measures could be put in place in the outermost regions for the distribution of such aid. |
| 10. emphasises the need to protect the interests of the outermost regions when EU foreign policy is drafted and calls for the negative impact of Brexit on the outermost regions to be taken into account in the EU's future agreement with the UK, given the impact on these particularly vulnerable regions. | The Trade and Cooperation Agreement[8] has been agreed with the United Kingdom. However, it cannot mitigate all the negative impacts of Brexit, as the United Kingdom left the Single Market and Customs Union.

As a follow-up to the July 2020 European Council, on 25 December 2020, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Brexit Adjustment Reserve[9] which aims to help counter the adverse consequences in the Member States, regions and sectors that are worst affected by the withdrawal and to mitigate its impact. The Reserve will assist the Member States when designing support measures, focused in particular on the regions, areas and local communities. |
| 11. points out that, under REACT-EU, any projects that are financed in the ORs should address the challenges facing the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis, such as the tourism sector, as well as boosting investments in sectors linked to connectivity, including digital connectivity, and to the green and blue | The Commission is working with the national authorities of the three Member States with outermost regions to ensure that the projects to be financed by REACT-EU address the challenges facing the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 crisis. |

---

8   Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part; OJ L 444, 31.12.2020, p. 14–1462.
9   COM(2020) 854 final.

economies, and investment in skills and abilities that will lead to job creation and adaptation to the changes caused by the pandemic.	
13. recommends maintaining the balance that is needed between environmental objectives and the high social costs that may incur in the outermost regions and that, in the framework of the international negotiations, the European Commission recognizes the specificity of the outermost regions and excludes the flights between outermost regions and other EU Member States from the emissions trading system; the absence of derogations for these regions in the plans to include both maritime and air transport in the emissions trading system would have an extremely detrimental impact on their economic and social situation.	The economic and social impacts of including flights and voyages to and from outermost regions and EU Member States, as well as within/ between outermost regions is being analysed as part of the Impact Assessment on the review of the EU's emissions trading system.
22. considers that the renewal of the outermost regions' fishing fleet continues to be constrained by the application of European rules, and considers that further efforts are needed to ensure greater consistency between the revised State aid guidelines for fisheries and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), so that the renewal of the outermost regions' fishing fleet may be eligible under the latter.	The provisional agreement on the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) 2021-2027[10] provides support for the modernisation of existing vessels, but does not include the possibility to grant public support for the construction of new fishing vessels. As indicated in its statement accompanying the provisional agreement, the Commission takes note of the difficulties encountered to grant State aid for the renewal of the fleets in the outermost regions. With a view to sustainable development in the outermost regions, the Commission will continue to assist the Member States in improving the collection of scientific data in these regions. This data, once gathered, will facilitate the application of the guidelines for the examination of State aid to the fishery sector.
24. regrets the fact that the outermost regions' requests for plans compensating for additional costs have not been taken into account and	On 25 August 2020, the Commission adopted revised compensation plans under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), in the six

---

[10] https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press/commissioner-sinkevi%C4%8Dius-welcomes-provisional-political-agreement-european-maritime-fisheries_en

supports their request for an adjusted and flexible application of the amounts and their implementing arrangements.	French outermost regions of Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Mayotte, Reunion Island and Saint-Martin with a new calculation scheme to take into account the evolution of the economic situation. Moreover, COVID-19 related amendments were adopted on 22 September 2020 for three French outermost regions, following a proposal by France.
26. advocates maintaining the specific derogations for the outermost regions in the first pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), namely decoupling and the aid reduction scheme.	In the Commission proposal for the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Programme of options specifically relating to remoteness and insularity (POSEI) remains unchanged. POSEI will not be part of the CAP Strategic Plans. However, some elements of the proposed legislation (notably conditionality) will continue to apply, as it is presently the case.
	The operation of the POSEI programmes will not change. The programmes will continue to be designed by Member States within their allocations. Member States can choose measures according to outermost regions' needs, to break down the amount by measure, depending on the objectives of the programmes. Stronger coordination with other CAP interventions such as rural development is needed.
27. regrets, however, that where the EAFRD is concerned, the proposal for a Multi-Annual Financial Framework has reduced co-financing for the outermost regions.	The Commission had initially proposed a co-financing rate of 70% under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) for the outermost regions and less developed regions. The European Parliament proposed a co-financing rate of 85% for both.
	The European Council Conclusions of 17-21 July2020[11] set the EAFRD co-financing rate for outermost regions that are not less developed regions at 80% and for less developed regions at 85%.
	This means that most outermost regions would benefit from a co-financing rate of 85%; and the minority of outermost regions (those that do not

---

[11] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf

	fall under the less developed regions category) will benefit from a co-financing rate of 80%, which is significantly higher than the 60% rate that would applies to (other) transition regions.
	The Commission will do its utmost to facilitate a compromise between the co-legislators in the trilogue negotiations on the CAP reform.
28. notes that the COVID-19 crisis has caused a serious problem for food distribution in the outermost regions; rejects the idea of reducing the CAP budget allocation for these regions in the future financial period and calls for the current POSEI allocations to be reinstated.	The Commission welcomes that the European Parliament and the Council have agreed to keep the POSEI budget at its current level in the CAP rules for the transitional period 2021-2022. As such, there is no cut in POSEI funding in 2021 and 2022.
	For the 2023-2027 period, the funding to maintain POSEI at 2014-2020 levels as well as its financing modalities need to be discussed between the European Parliament and the Council in the framework of the CAP reform. In this context, the Commission will support facilitating a compromise on POSEI funding.
29. reminds the European Commission that the trade agreements it negotiates with non-EU countries should include a specific chapter addressing any issue of particular relevance to the ORs;	The Commission takes the special status granted to the outermost regions under Article 349 TFEU into account in its trade policy and in all free trade agreements (FTAs).
	In line with Article 349 TFEU and the 2017 Communication on a strategic partnership with the outermost regions[12], the Commission assesses the potential impact of trade agreement on these regions at the stage of the Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) of future FTAs. Moreover, SIAs also contribute to identify possible sectors that represent new market opportunities for the outermost regions.
	Where applicable, the FTA propose measures to ensure that the agreements do not have a negative impact on outermost regions' sensitive products, taking into account their economic dependence on a few products, as well as their remoteness and insularity.

---

[12] COM(2017) 623 final.

	In certain cases, specific arrangements are agreed with third countries. In all the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) of relevance to the outermost regions, this includes a specific reference to Article 349 TFEU, explicit safeguard clauses and a provision devoted to reinforcing cooperation between the outermost regions and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACPs) concerned by the EPA, including the coordination with the EU funding instruments for cohesion and development.
33. calls on the European Commission to ensure that its measures on the circular economy take account of the specific nature of the outermost regions, which are characterised by their isolation and remoteness and because they are facing enormous pressure due to their predominantly tourism-based economic models; 34. hopes that an ad hoc platform will make it possible to develop appropriate measures for controlling the entry and exit of waste in the outermost regions, contributing to proper waste management and supporting the aim of these regions to become "zero-waste" regions.	The Commission is aware of the specific challenges and opportunities for circular economy in the outermost regions. The Commission will harness the potential of EU funding instruments to support the necessary investments at regional level and ensure that all regions benefit from the transition. Circular economy solutions will be tailored to the outermost regions, due to their dependence on resource imports, high waste generation fuelled by tourism, and waste exports. Moreover, the Commission encourages public authorities to engage with the tool TAIEX EIR PEER-TO-PEER[13] to facilitate peer-to-peer learning between authorities – including on circularity in isolated territories. The Commission will continue to support Green Public Procurement's capacity building with guidance, training and dissemination of good practices; and draws attention to the Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform[14] where public authorities and stakeholders can share good practices and learn from others' success stories.
38. calls for any measures in the field of carbon emissions reduction to be assessed and addressed in a comprehensive manner, seeking a fair balance between the need to safeguard the	The Commission remains committed to climate action including international commitments made under the Paris Agreement. Measures related to the outermost regions will take into account these

---

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/p2p/index_en.htm
[14] https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/

environment and the needs of the general public in terms of accessibility and maintaining the economy.	regions' specific constraints and vulnerabilities.
39. points out the need for the eligibility criteria of the Just Transition Fund to be more accurately adapted and for the situation of the outermost regions to be included in the EU's long-term strategic vision for adaptation to climate change.	Further to the regulatory framework, the eligibility of territories to the Just Transition Fund is determined through the territorial just transition plans, which aim at identifying those which are the most negatively impacted by the transition towards a climate neutral economy. The adoption of these territorial just transition plans unlocks the access of the concerned territories to all three pillars of the Just Transition Mechanism.

Moreover, the Commission has put in place special tools to support clean energy transition on islands, including the outermost regions, such as through the Clean Energy for EU islands Initiative[15] or the New Energy Solutions Optimized for Islands (NESOI) project facility[16]. |
| 41. points out that the outermost regions are the only regions dependent on fossil fuels, with isolated energy systems that cannot be connected to European networks, and regrets that the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) does not take account of their particular situation; considers that the outermost regions should be included in the Just Transition Mechanism and benefit from measures supporting their energy transition to clean fuels. | The Regulation for a Just Transition Fund requires the relevant Member States to take particular account of the situation of outermost regions when preparing their territorial just transition plans.

The purpose of the Just Transition Mechanism is to alleviate the social and economic costs stemming from transition and relevant energy transition measures when they have a job creation potential. Energy transition measures can be supported under the Just Transition Fund (pillar 1), as well as under the dedicated InvestEU window (pillar 2) and public loan facility (pillar 3) of the Just Transition Mechanism. |
| 45. highlights the enormous impact that the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is having on employment in the outermost regions with a sharp rise in poverty levels stemming from loss of economic activity and falling revenues in key sectors, and the need to | The Commission services are monitoring closely the situation in the outermost regions and providing information on various support initiatives to address the COVID-19 crisis.

The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiatives (CRII and CRII+)[17] help Member States fund their |

---

[15] https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/markets-and-consumers/clean-energy-eu-islands_en
[16] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/864266
[17] https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/coronavirus-response/

continue strengthening the specific support instruments to create new, niche employment opportunities and to preserve jobs in traditional sectors.	crisis response and repair measures, allowing for the rapid mobilisation of cohesion and solidarity funds where most needed, such as in the health and tourism sectors. The injected amounts of unspent EU cohesion money into the economy allowed the regions to use the ESF to support healthcare and to protect jobs through short-time work schemes. REACT-EU provides additional funds to tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a dedicated additional amount of €146 million (in 2018 constant prices) earmarked for the outermost regions in addition to shares under the national envelopes of their respective Member States. The future ESF+ programmes will need to integrate the new challenges induced by the crisis: tackling the rise in youth unemployment, the need for more significant food and material aid to the most deprived, or the rise of child poverty. Accompanying the transition to a climate neutral and modern digital economy will require supporting the uptake of skills to help people meet the requirements on the labour markets of the future – taking into account the specificities of each territory.
46. calls for measures to be taken to increase the outermost regions' participation in all actions under the Erasmus+ programme and to promote cooperation and mobility exchanges between people and organisations in these regions and non-EU countries, particularly their neighbours.	In 2021-2027, students from the outermost regions will continue benefiting from higher individual grants and top-ups for their travel costs as in the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme. The number of participants from these regions has steadily increased over the previous programming period, with over 20,500 learners and staff mobilities reported. The Commission will retain these dedicated special measures – higher individual grants and travel grants – in the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme. The outermost regions will benefit from a higher programme budget on a proportional basis. This means that individuals and organisations from these regions will have more opportunities to participate in all actions. The new programme will

	offer more opportunities in third countries resulting in more mobility opportunities with neighbouring countries and the rest of the world.
47. hopes that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund will provide the necessary flexibility in the provision of aid at a time when major restructuring is having a significant impact on the economy of these regions;	The new European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for displaced workers (EGF) will enable more workers to benefit from European support: - it will no longer be conditional on the cause of restructuring which has led to their dismissal; - the threshold has been reduced to 200 redundant workers (500 in the 2014-2020 Regulation); - more flexibility for small labour markets, such as in the outermost regions, to applications involving Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), when redundancies have a serious impact on employment and the local, regional or national economy; - a region exceptionally hard hit by restructuring and whose economy is based mainly on SMEs, can combine dismissals from different sectors; - the co-financing rate will be aligned with the highest co-financing rate under the ESF+ in any Member State;
49. calls for the remoteness, geographical isolation and territorial dispersion of the outermost regions to be taken into account in the design, adoption and implementation of policies to reduce the physical and digital accessibility gap with the EU market and also at intra- and inter-regional level.	The special characteristics and constraints of the outermost regions have been duly taken into account in the Air Services Regulation[18], which enables Member States to impose Public Service Obligations[19] in order to ensure adequate connectivity of isolated or developing regions. Air services operated under Public Service Obligations need to meet set standards of continuity, regularity, pricing or minimum capacity. The Air Services Regulation also acknowledges that special arrangements may be justified regarding the rules on the period of validity of the contracts for Public Service Obligations covering routes to the outermost

---

[18] Regulation (EC) No 1008/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 September 2008 on common rules for the operation of air services in the Community (Recast); OJ L 293, 31.10.2008, p. 3–20.

[19] https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/pso_en

	regions.
	The Commission seeks to address the outermost regions digital accessibility gap through the gigabit strategy for connectivity, and other regulations such as the roaming regulation[20] and the WiFi4EU initiative[21]. This supports outermost regions' participation in the digital single market. Where the distance to the outermost regions offers a significant disadvantage, an increased level of co-financing of 70% instead of 30% will be possible subject to the adoption of the Regulation establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).
50. notes that accessibility by air is also an essential factor in the competitiveness of the tourism sector, the main economic driver in many of these regions and which has been hit particularly badly by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore calls on the Commission to take this aspect into account when drawing up policies to improve the physical accessibility of the outermost regions.	Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has taken various initiatives to increase and support coordination between Member States to facilitate free movement of people, including air travel in the EU and European Economic Area. Public Service Obligations, which the Member States can impose in line with the Air Services Regulation, can play a significant positive role in terms of connectivity. Experience shows that Public Service Obligations covering routes to islands may in most cases be necessary and justified when there is not enough demand to support a commercial operation all year round.
51. welcomes the fact that the study on outermost regions' connectivity needs has been carried out and that the Commission has taken account of their disadvantage and their dependence on ports and airports, by proposing measures under the ERDF and the CEF; considers, however, that these measures are not sufficient and that transport policy needs to be brought into line with the reality facing the outermost regions.	In its recently adopted Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy[22], the Commission recognises that it is crucial that mobility is available and affordable for all, and that outermost regions are better connected. To that end, the Commission will continue to provide support from the Cohesion Fund and European Regional Development Fund. In addition, CEF can support TEN-T components located in the outermost regions, such as maritime ports.

---

[20] Regulation (EU) No 531/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2012 on roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union; OJ L 172, 30.6.2012, p. 10–35.
[21] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/wifi4eu-free-wi-fi-europeans
[22] COM(2020) 789 final.

53. considers that it would be useful to provide aid under the CEF for the deployment of backbone networks, including underwater cables, to connect the outermost regions within their Member States, between themselves and between the EU and non-EU countries.	The Proposal for a Regulation establishing the CEF (still subject to formal adoption) would allow for network integration and territorial accessibility, including in the outermost regions and islands. This will support the deployment of submarine backbone network cables for certain routes (within Member States, between Member States, and between the EU and third countries), including remote territories.

Submarine cables play an essential role in ensuring high capacity and high performance (in terms of resilience, security, redundancy and latency) of digital connectivity. The envisaged co-funding action concerns submarine cable backbone networks addressing e.g. the connection of territories of the Union including the outermost regions. EU support is needed to target market failure and contribute to making specific projects possible, which would not be realised by market forces alone. |
| 54. reminds the Commission that the regional integration of the outermost regions in their respective geographical areas remains a priority objective and that European territorial cooperation programmes are a key instrument for achieving this, and therefore considers it essential to maintain the funding earmarked for these programmes and the operational development of the new outermost regions' component without, however, limiting these regions' access to the other components and their financial allocations. | The proposal for a Regulation on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg), agreed by the European Parliament and the Council on 16 December 2020, dedicates €281 million to the outermost cooperation programmes (the so called strand D) an amount comparable to the 2014-20 budget. €10 million have been transferred from Interreg Europe to strand D for the outermost regions.

The transnational and interregional strands of the proposed Interreg Regulation are also open to outermost regions' participation. |
| 55. finds it regrettable that the co-financing rate in Europe for outermost regions is lower under the ETC-INTERREG regulation for the 2021-2027 period; this is at odds with the strategic importance given by the European Commission since 2004 to strengthening the regional integration of outermost regions within their geographical areas; | The maximum co-financing rates applicable under the political agreement for the proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Territorial Cooperation goal are set at 80%, 5% lower than the rates applicable under the 2014-2020 period.

However, this ceiling is increased to 85% for the new component dedicated to the outermost regions. This is therefore comparable to the |

	situation in the preceding period.
56. calls on the Commission to support, under the Interreg programme, joint strategic cooperation projects involving all the outermost regions.	The Commission fully supports outermost regions' wish to co-operate amongst themselves and encourages the Member States to explore all possibilities to facilitate this process in Interreg Europe.
57. reminds the Commission of its commitment to implement a specific, simple and clear solution allowing for the joint programming of the ERDF with the financial instruments of neighbouring non-EU countries. The Committee regrets that this particular solution has still not been drafted, and urges the Commission to resolve this issue definitively in the 2021-2027 programming period.	The Commission has fulfilled its commitment to facilitate the cooperation between outermost regions and their neighbouring regions and countries. The proposal for a Regulation on European Territorial Cooperation provides that programmes under this component should be implemented through a single set of rules, either under shared management or, as a whole or partially, under indirect management, in agreement with the Member State(s) concerned. The Commission also proposed provisions allowing for joint programming in the draft Overseas Association Decision (OAD), which will constitute the new framework for the EU's relations with its Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs). The Commission is working to improve 'upstream' coordination and allowing a better cooperation between the European Regional Development Fund and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) for the 2021-2027 programming period.
59. notes the Commission's commitment to supporting the outermost regions in managing migration issues in a sustainable way and calls for specific measures to be provided for under the Asylum and Migration Fund for the financial period 2021-2027.	Recognising the specific challenges the outermost regions face in managing migration, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) envisages that the relevant Member States, through their national AMIF programmes, help outermost regions manage migration sustainably and handle potential situations of migratory pressure.
60. calls on the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to take account of the outermost regions in the discussions on the future of Europe and in the	The Commission remains fully committed to the Conference on the Future of Europe and wishes to encourage all citizens to participate to ensure a broad and balanced representation in European

development of future European policies, ensuring that Article 349 TFEU is applied fully and effectively.	Citizens' panels. The Commission encourages the outermost regions and Member States to organise debates at national, regional and local levels to provide input to the Conference.

N°10	Challenges for public transport in cities and metropolitan regions

N°10   Challenges for public transport in cities and metropolitan regions
Own-initiativeCOR-2020-02613 – COTER-VII/003
141st plenary session – December 2020
Rapporteur: Adam STRUZIK (PL/EPP)
DG MOVE – Commissioner VĂLEAN

Points of the European Committee of the Regions opinion considered essential	European Commission position
6. points out the need to treat the transport system as an integrated system. The increasing importance of mobility as a service (MaaS) and the need to introduce innovative solutions in managing and organising transport should encourage local and regional authorities to link public and individual transport (particularly walking, cycling and using personal transport devices) in spatial planning and plans concerning transport.	The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy[1] underlines that seamless multimodality enabled by digital solutions is vital in urban and sub-urban areas. It highlights that the EU needs to transform its legal framework to support multimodal travel information, booking and ticketing services, while at the same time looking at the rights and obligations of online intermediaries and multimodal digital service providers selling ticket and / or mobility services.
	In this context, the Commission will examine further whether data sharing and selling arrangements are fit for purpose. Particular attention should also be paid to the inclusion of public and individual transport in services providing information or selling mobility tickets / products.
	Moreover, the strategy also states that by revising the Urban Mobility Package to promote and support these sustainable and healthy transport modes, the Commission will contribute to the improvement of the current European framework for urban mobility, including clearer guidance on mobility management.
41. suggests to the European Commission the possibility to develop, in cooperation with public transport operators, a Europe-wide framework for linking train tickets with urban transport tickets in departure and destination cities (e.g. for a set fee). Users would profit greatly from a single platform or mobile	The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy outlines that by 2030, seamless multimodal passenger transport will be facilitated by integrated electronic ticketing. To achieve this objective, the Commission will examine further whether data sharing and selling arrangements are fit for purpose, or whether additional provisions

---
[1]   COM(2020) 789 final.

application and payment system. Such solutions are already in practice in various Member States and providing this possibility throughout the whole EU would make it easier to plan journeys.	are needed to support the development of multimodal digital services. Multimodal digital mobility services are already in place in some Member States, and facilitate the sale of mobility services provided by mobility operators. Interoperability of these services will need to be strengthened to facilitate planning throughout the whole EU. The Strategy also recognises that mobility needs to be available and affordable for all, accessible for persons with reduced mobility and with disabilities, and that rural and remote regions need to be better connected.
8. recommends collecting data demonstrating mobility flows in the MRs in order to obtain comprehensive picture about the traffic situation to design more tailored measures, develop evidence-based sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs) and to channel investment from cohesion policy funds and beyond in a more targeted way.	As noted by the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, increasing the modal shares of collective transport, walking and cycling, as well as automated, connected and multimodal mobility will significantly lower pollution and congestion from transport, especially in cities and improve the health and well-being of people. The Commission will further engage with cities and Member States on the objective that all large and medium-sized cities, urban nodes on the TEN-T network, put in place their own sustainable urban mobility plans by 2030 and that they collect basic urban mobility data. The plans should include new goals, for example on having zero emissions and zero road fatalities.
24. notes that it is necessary to consider possibilities to boost investment in sustainable mobility, for example through the Connecting Europe Facility, Modernisation Fund and the Recovery and Resilience facility. It is also important to increase mobility through investment in infrastructure that improves accessibility of urban nodes and nodes in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)	In the NextGenerationEU communication of May 2020[2], the Commission highlighted the extension of clean public transport and sustainable urban mobility as a possible priority for recovery plans from the Member States. EU funds for the just transition and modernisation of economies in countries that face steep decarbonisation challenges also list clean public

---

[2]   COM(2020) 456 final.

and to give priority to these nodes.	transport as a priority.
	Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)[3] provides financial support to projects with the aim to increase the environmental sustainability and efficiency of the transport sector in Europe, as well as the deployment of smart infrastructure along the Trans-European Network (TEN-T) core and comprehensive network.
	Through support for smart and sustainable mobility, taking account of the different starting positions of EU Member States, this also supports the broad objective of strengthening social, economic and territorial cohesion in the EU.
	In addition, CEF addresses bottlenecks, missing links and cross-border sections, co-funds investments in alternative fuels, innovation and digitalisation of transport. Thus, it contributes to a more environmental friendly transport sector.
	60% of the CEF 2021-2027 transport expenditures aims at contribute to climate objectives, implying a strong focus on the digital and climate transition of the transport sector – with a clear priority given to the most decarbonised modes, rail and inland navigation. It will also accelerate the deployment of green technologies.
	Up to date, CEF I transport has a portfolio of around €23 billion of grants representing an investment volume of almost €50 billion.
	The 2021-27 programming period is crucial for completion of the core TEN-T network, which is due by 2030, as set in the TEN-T Guidelines[4]. The Commission assures the Committee that for the next revision, with a view of adoption in 2023, TEN-T nodes and urban nodes will be paid particular attention.

3   https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility/cef-transport
4   Regulation (EU) No 1315/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network and repealing Decision No 661/2010/EU; OJ L 348, 20.12.2013, p. 1–128.

	The Commission will continue working with fora such as the EU Covenant of Mayors to support cities that want to organise joint tenders for clean buses and other clean forms of public transport. The Committee now has a representative on the Board of the EU Covenant.
30. calls for ensuring a greater share of funding for urban public transport from the Connecting Europe Facility, the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, making use of them faster, and greater impact of funding at the regional and local levels. These measures will play a decisive role in implementing the operational and technological solutions at the urban level and in ensuring sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions.	The Cohesion and regional funds will have higher targets for climate spending, which again can benefit public transport projects. CEF I, so far supported 50 actions under the priority Nodes of the core networks with an overall CEF support of €302 million translating into €915 million investment. In addition, CEF II, as indicated in Article 9.2.b (Vbis)[5] the programme aims at supporting actions by moving interoperability barriers in urban nodes.

---

[5]   Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Connecting Europe Facility and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014: Common understanding reached between the co-legislators (March 2019).