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Implementation of territorial development (CPR, Title III, Chapter II) and its application in the European Territorial agenda 2030

European Parliament resolution of 16 January 2024 on the implementation of territorial development (CPR, Title III, Chapter II) and its application in the European Territorial Agenda 2030 (2023/2048(INI))

(C/2024/5704)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Title XVIII thereof,

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy ([1]) ('the Common Provisions Regulation' – CPR),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund ([2]),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments ([3]),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund ([4])

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 ([5]),

— having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) in the years 2021 and 2022 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 as regards resources and application in the years 2021 and 2022 and Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards resources and the distribution of such support in respect of the years 2021 and 2022 ([6]),

([1]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.
([2]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60.
([3]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94.
([4]) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1.
([5]) OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1.
([6]) OJ L 437, 28.12.2020, p. 1.

— having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 ([7]),

— having regard to the Agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),

— having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities and communities,

— having regard to the Territorial Agenda 2030 – A future for all places, adopted at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion on 1 December 2020,

— having regard to the Pact of Amsterdam establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU, agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016,

— having regard to the New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good, adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020,

— having regard to the Ljubljana Agreement, adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters on 26 November 2021,

— having regard to the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations on 20 October 2016,

— having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2023 entitled 'Harnessing talent in Europe's regions' (COM(2023)0032),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 4 February 2022 entitled '8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050' (COM(2022)0034),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 30 June 2021 entitled 'A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040' (COM(2021)0345),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2021 entitled 'Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030' (COM(2021)0101),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled 'The European Green Deal' (COM(2019)0640),

— having regard to the Commission communication of 17 September 2020 entitled 'Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition – Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people (COM(2020)0562),

— having regard to the Commission's New European Bauhaus initiative launched on 16 September 2020,

— having regard to the Commission staff working document of 17 June 2022 entitled 'New European Bauhaus territorial development model (NEB TDM) financial instrument' (SWD(2022)0172),

— having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2022 on the new European Bauhaus ([8]),

([7]) OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.
([8]) OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 56.

— having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2022 on a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040 ([9]),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report ([10]),

— having regard to its resolution of 15 February 2022 on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era ([11]),

— having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments ([12]),

— having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change ([13]),

— having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2018 on the role of EU regions and cities in implementing the COP 21 Paris Agreement on climate change ([14]),

— having regard to the opinion of 18 September 2020 of the European Economic and Social Committee entitled 'Revision of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU' ([15]),

— having regard to the in-depth analysis entitled 'Territorial Agenda 2030 – Implementation Review', published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies on 7 June 2023 ([16]),

— having regard to the study conducted for the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) entitled 'Integrated territorial and urban strategies: how are ESIF adding value in 2014-2020', published in December 2017 ([17]),

— having regard to STRAT-Board, the interactive tool developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission and DG REGIO displaying how European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) support the integrated approach to urban and territorial development ([18]),

— having regard to the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies ([19]) and the Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies ([20]), published by the JRC,

— having regard to the working paper by DG REGIO entitled 'The geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap', published in March 2023,

— having regard to the study conducted for the Council of European Municipalities and Regions entitled 'ITI and CLLD – The use of integrated territorial tools in cohesion policy' published in December 2022,

— having regard to the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities of 2007 and to the New Leipzig Charter – the transformative power of cities for the common good of 30 November 2020,

— having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,

([9]) OJ C 177, 17.5.2023, p. 35.
([10]) OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 100.
([11]) OJ C 342, 6.9.2022, p. 2.
([12]) OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 125.
([13]) OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 26.
([14]) OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 31.
([15]) OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 145.
([16]) In-depth analysis – 'Territorial Agenda 2030 – Implementation Review', European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B – Structural and Cohesion Policies, 7 June 2023.
([17]) European Commission, 'Integrated territorial and urban strategies: how are ESIF adding value in 2014-2020? – Final Report', December 2017.
([18]) European Commission, 'STRAT-Board'.
([19]) European Commission, 'Handbook of territorial and local development strategies'.
([20]) European Commission, 'Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies'

— having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A9-0420/2023),

A. whereas cohesion policy remains and should remain the principal investment policy for the EU's regions and cities, and is not intended to consistently serve as a first choice for financial assistance to face unforeseen events that shake our socio-economy; whereas the Territorial Agenda is the guiding instrument for the EU's territorial policy, as reflected in its national programmes and projects, providing orientation for strategic spatial planning and regional development, calling for the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels to be strengthened and seeking to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and to help achieve the SDGs in Europe;

B. whereas the challenges that EU regions are facing are identified and managed at territorial level;

C. whereas the previous and current Common Provisions Regulations make no specific reference to the Territorial Agenda 2020 or 2030 respectively; whereas Title III, Chapter II of the current Common Provisions Regulation provides the basis for the drawing of cohesion policy funds through territorial development strategies; whereas Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 ([21]) refers to sustainable urban development based on integrated sustainable urban strategies as the framework for the selection of single operations;

D. whereas the place-based approach to policymaking, built on integrated territorial development, aims to unleash unique potential related to territorial resources, knowledge and assets, while recognising the need for tailored solutions in different types of territories;

E. whereas it appears that the main difficulties encountered by local and regional institutions and civil society for the 2014-2020 period were insufficient technical and administrative support, disproportionate bureaucratic hurdles, a lack of skills and training, knowledge and capacity building, and poor cooperation among different levels of governance, in addition to a slow absorption of funds;

F. whereas it appears that in regions and administrative units where LEADER is implemented, a mandatory Local Action Group manager contributes to improving the performance and absorption of regional funding;

G. whereas the richness of the EU's territorial diversity should be seen as a dynamic and complex system in which each region faces development challenges according to its own particular characteristics; whereas growing inequalities between places and between people have reached a critical level and concerted action at all geographical and governance levels is needed to ensure positive future perspectives for all people and places throughout the EU;

H. whereas the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies offers methodological support at all levels;

I. whereas micro-cohesion is a form of balance for underdeveloped areas within more developed regions; whereas, explicitly focusing on 'places and people', the Territorial Agenda (TA2030) pioneers the 'idea of interpersonal cohesion' alongside territorial cohesion, taking into account that these disparities can only be addressed by paying more attention to the diversity and potential of territories, as well as designing place-based policies and strategies, with the aim of better incorporating a territorial dimension into all EU funds;

J. whereas Article 28 CPR designates integrated territorial investments (ITIs) and community-led local development (CLLD) as the instruments for implementing territorial development strategies and calls for coherence and coordination among the funds when several are applied to the same strategy for regional or local development; whereas these instruments are aimed at bottom-up territorial development and reinforce the active participation of local stakeholders;

K. whereas in the 2014-2020 period, 1 975 strategies were programmed among the then 28 Member States, financed with EUR 19 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), of which EUR 13,8 billion was allocated to ITIs in nine Member States;

([21]) Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006, OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289.

L. whereas CLLD was the second most used tool by Member States for developing territorial or local strategies in the 2014-2020 period and guarantees that local and regional governments and stakeholders will be closely involved in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the EU funds they receive; whereas there is no earmarking for the use of CLLD in the 2021-2027 programming period;

M. whereas the implementation of ITIs and CLLDs remains uneven across the EU and several Member States and managing authorities do not seem very committed to implementing them; whereas the interpretation and implementation of policy objective 5 'Europe closer to citizens' (PO5) differs among Member States, resulting in low ITI and CLLD implementation; whereas the co-legislators should consider, in the future, a more flexible implementation of PO5 without strict requirements on strategies and governance, helping to open it to all kinds of initiatives that contribute to regional and local development;

N. whereas ITIs and CLLDs are instruments that should be aimed not only at facilitating a bottom-up approach to territorial development by involving local and regional governments from the start, but also by facilitating dialogue between the various stakeholders and by increasing cooperation among the public and private sector, as well as by fostering cooperation and the transfer of information among all levels of government;

O. whereas the TA2030 invites Parliament and its Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible for economic, social and territorial cohesion, to take its objectives into account by advocating its priorities in EU legislative processes;

P. whereas the ITI and place-based policies are necessary conditions to achieve EU strategic objectives such as the green and digital transitions; whereas place-based policies can help territories to escape from long-term economic decline and the 'regional development trap', in which a region is unable to retain its economic dynamics in terms of income, productivity and employment;

Q. whereas the TA2030 defines two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, which have six priorities (Balanced Europe, Functional Regions, Integration beyond borders, Healthy Environment, Circular Economy and Sustainable Connections) for developing the European territory as a whole along with all of its places; whereas the TA2030 further aligns EU territorial development objectives with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal; whereas the European Urban Agenda, through the Leipzig Charter, supports the objectives of the TA2030;

R. whereas strong common territorial development through the CPR and implementation of the TA2030 can serve as a vehicle for strengthening solidarity and democratic processes and for a fair and green EU; whereas territorial approaches add value by applying a strategic, spatial lens that captures the specific combinations of social, institutional, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities that influence the development of all types of territories;

S. whereas implementation of the TA2030 priorities remains uneven across the EU, in particular taking into consideration spatial disparities such as insularity; whereas the TA2030 conclusions show growing inequalities within the EU, which accentuate the gaps between people and between territories;

T. whereas the TA2030 calls for the territorial dimension of sectoral policies to be strengthened at all levels of governance; whereas the driving principles of the TA2030 are encompassed in the two priorities 'People and places are drifting apart' and 'Sustainable development and climate change';

U. whereas seven pilot actions were launched with the adoption of the TA2030, serving as an example of the application of its objectives on the ground, at local and regional level, and inspiring joint actions across the EU, namely: 'A future for lagging regions', 'Understanding how sector policies shape spatial (im)balances', 'Small places matter', 'Cross-border spatial planning', 'Climate action in Alpine towns', ,Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition', and 'Reducing land artificialisation, urban sprawl and soil sealing in cities of different sizes and functional urban areas';

V. whereas, taking into account the limited geographical balance in the development of these pilot actions and the administrative difficulties encountered when pilot actions were financed by several programmes, better data collection is needed, as well as a coherent revision of the TA2030;

1. Stresses that, in the 2014-2020 period, only 28 % of strategies for sustainable urban development were implemented through ITIs; calls on the Commission to take action to encourage the use of such tools to develop the TA2030, in particular through stepped-up communication activities;

2. Stresses the valuable contribution to territorial development delivered by actions implemented through CLLD such as those under the LEADER programme; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce LEADER by increasing its budgetary envelope, by guaranteeing a high level of autonomy for the Local Action Groups regarding their constitution and their decision-making and reducing the administrative burden;

3. Calls on the Commission to use the results of the upcoming 2024 evaluation report for the 2014-2020 programming period, as well as the results of actions delivered through CLLD such as those under the LEADER programme, to support programmes for the 2021-2027 period; notes the importance of the qualitative analysis of territorial development tools; regrets, in this regard, the conclusion of the special report of the European Court of Auditors on LEADER and CLLD that their benefits are not sufficiently demonstrated;

4. Welcomes the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies and the Handbook of sustainable urban development strategies as guides for all administrative levels for the design, implementation and monitoring of territorial and local, including urban, development strategies; believes the dissemination of good practices should be fostered with a view to ensuring that projects are effective and sustainable; regrets, however, the belated publication of these handbooks and encourages the Commission to produce timely guidelines to simplify the process for developing the programmes; highlights the need to offer more guidance and greater flexibility to Member States on the implementation of PO5 'Europe closer to citizens', and the actions to achieve it, and to align them with those set out in the TA2030 and create incentives to allocate more funding to PO5;

5. Calls on the Member States to promote strategic spatial planning that takes into account territories as a whole beyond metropolitan, urban and functional urban areas; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to strengthen rural-urban links as a way of achieving better balanced territorial development across the EU and to consider cross-border planning and implementation through bottom-up approaches such as CLLD/ITI;

6. Calls on the Commission and the Council to earmark funding for rural areas and regions that suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps in the same way that 8 % of cohesion policy funds are earmarked for the development of programmes under the Urban Agenda; notes that these funds should be predominantly used via integrated territorial development tools;

7. Takes into account the capacities demonstrated by local and regional authorities in the implementation and management of territorial tools, and considers that a paradigm shift is necessary in the involvement of local and regional authorities in the planning, implementation and management of territorial tools; calls for an effective implementation of the partnership principle and in-depth consultation with local and regional authorities and other stakeholders prior to the definition of ITI and CLLD actions; highlights the importance of the bottom-up approach to territorial development, while empowering citizens to take ownership of the development of their territories;

8. Calls for territorial or local development strategies funded by more than one programme to be merged into a single track, in accordance with Article 28 CPR and with the Commission's support, where needed, in order to prevent delays and administrative obstacles; welcomes the possibility, introduced in the 2021-2027 programming period, to designate a lead fund for strategies funded by more than one fund;

9. Notes that territorial instruments, such as CLLDs and ITIs, are proven measures to bring the EU closer to citizens; notes that the data in the STRAT-Board for the 2014-2020 period shows that CLLDs played a major role in the development of territorial strategies, highlighting the strong interest at local level in actively participating in the development of these strategies; calls on the Member States and the Commission to simplify the administrative management of funds, especially cases where CLLDs draw from more than one fund; stresses that ITIs are the main tool used by Member States with a larger allocation of ERDF funds, as they may quickly absorb the amounts and are able to cover several main axes present in one or several programmes;

10. Underlines the clear distinction between Member States that are committed to developing ITIs or CLLDs and those that are not; calls on the Commission to clarify this differentiation in order to avoid geographical disparities and to provide for tailored technical support for the Member States that have not made use of these territorial tools; encourages all Member States to make greater use of the integrated territorial development tools as defined in Article 28 CPR and to ensure respect for partnership as defined in Article 8 CPR; takes the view that integrated territorial development tools should be mandatory for Member States;

11. Welcomes the technical simplifications in territorial development introduced in the 2021-2027 programming period; calls, however, on the Commission and the Member States to keep the necessary additional administrative regulations to a strict minimum and to focus more on proportionality, since small projects currently have proportionally higher administrative burdens (for beneficiaries) and administrative costs (for programme authorities) than larger projects;

12. Considers the TA2030 to be a real and proper instrument that aims to reduce the spatial dimension of inequalities and to ensure the EU's cohesion through the management of each of its regions with their particularities; believes, therefore, that societies and territories should be more involved in acknowledging the importance of this Agenda; calls on the Commission to modify the role of the TA2030 beyond that of a territorial management guide;

13. Observes that the TA2030 not only advocates place-based policy responses to territorial challenges, but also provides a vision and ambition for the territorial cohesion objective through better involvement of local and regional authorities and citizens;

14. Highlights that although multi-funding is one of the main purposes of the territorial integrated tools, current findings show that the use of multi-funding may still prove difficult in some countries, especially since, in the current period, the EAFRD (rural development) is no longer included in the CPR and therefore additional and specific measures to align the rules of EAFRD and other cohesion policy funds would be needed (i.e. using different EU funds for integrated projects at the local level that address several policy objectives);

15. Calls on the Member States to actively promote gender mainstreaming in the preparation and implementation of the TA2030's pilot projects on the ground;

16. Stresses that a fair and dignified income and quality of life for citizens and their families in rural areas is essential to ensure social progress and successful territorial and local development; insists on the need to ensure decent working and living conditions and social protection for all;

17. Stresses the importance of improving policy coherence and implementing rural proofing of future EU integrated territorial development and other relevant initiatives to assess the coherence and complementarity of EU policies and their potential impact on rural areas, thus effectively preventing rural depopulation and facilitating generational renewal, equal access to high-quality essential services and job creation in rural areas; stresses the importance of the rural proofing mechanism also when Member States assess the impacts of proposed legislation in rural areas; underlines the importance of involving local and regional authorities in the definition and implementation of rural proofing mechanisms, as well as in their governance at both EU and national levels, to combat transport-related social exclusion and to improve the territorial accessibility of the areas concerned in order to improve cross-border and rural-urban cooperation, access to broadband internet and adequate services, particularly healthcare and education, as well as the diversification of the rural economy and the revitalisation of rural areas, increasing the attractiveness of these areas, as well as ensuring a sustainable future for these communities;

18. Stresses that TA2030 actions should play a central role in partnership agreements and programmes; points out that these actions should be more decisive in the allocation of funds and the need to promote the integration of the TA2030 into EU policies, with a focus on levels of governance closer to the ground; believes that the TA2030 should be provided with adequate funding and an allocation methodology in the future multiannual financial framework;

19. Underlines as essential the inclusion of TA2030 priorities and objectives in the legislative instruments and programmes of the cohesion policy funds, which should be tailored to each territory; welcomes the TA2030 pilot actions that have been developed and calls on the Member States and the Commission to continue investing in these actions, improving their geographical balance and better coordinating them with the principles of the TA2030;

20. Stresses the need to involve Parliament, in particular its competent Committee on Regional Development, in the pilot actions in order to ensure that they are in line with current EU priorities, and to promote the results of pilot actions and communicate them at EU level, integrating and coordinating them with initiatives such as cohesion policy, in particular the ERDF and Interreg;

21. Calls for a strategy to facilitate synergies between different EU funds for projects implemented through territorial tools and for the administrative simplification of pilot actions financed by more than one fund in order to reduce the administrative barriers and facilitate applications for these projects;

22. Believes that businesses could play an essential role in territorial development strategies; calls on the Commission to support arrangements for collaborations between companies and local and regional authorities with a view to developing territorial development projects that foster job creation and economic growth;

23. Points out the huge potential of the TA2030 and its current and future pilot projects in addressing the highly diverse needs of non-urban areas, including rural areas, mountainous areas, islands and coastal areas, remote and sparsely populated areas and many other types of territories where a mix of urban and rural features coexist; highlights, in particular, the fact that rural areas are often confronted with demographic challenges, low population density and limited access to and quality of services of general interest, while not always having the capacity to design and implement innovative solutions, thus they can greatly benefit from the exchange of best practices;

24. Stresses the need for greater dissemination of the actions and achievements of the pilot projects as examples of the implementation of EU funds; favours the idea of a biennial conference to showcase the pilot actions to local and regional authorities, as well as relevant actors at national and EU level, linking it with other events such as those under the Rural Pact or the Cities Forum;

25. Calls on the Member States to develop their territorial agendas in line with the TA2030 as a basis for programming their territorial strategies, taking into account the specificities and highly diverse needs of each of their regions, and serving as an incentive, as well as in order to stimulate the decision-making process and the design of territorial and urban policies; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to enable different territorial strategies for all EU regions including rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, regions that suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as the northernmost regions and regions with very low population densities, islands, cross-border regions and mountain regions;

26. Highlights that the good performance of governance structures can determine the optimal mix of investment priorities in order to achieve the necessary multilevel vertical and horizontal coordination to design and deliver integrated development strategies;

27. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote the implementation of the TA2030 beyond pilot actions, making this instrument a reference framework for action that provides concrete and adapted guidelines for EU territories to improve their performance; highlights the opportunity to link regional funding to the achievement of TA2030 priorities, and calls on the Commission to develop monitoring indicators linking the TA2030 and the use of cohesion policy funds, in particular the ERDF;

28. Reiterates the need to urgently strengthen EU policy regarding mitigation and adaptation to climate change, also in the light of the growing trend of extreme weather events in recent years and months in the EU; calls, therefore, on the public authorities to continue the fight against climate change; highlights, in this context, the need to step up the ambition and quality of the pilot projects within the objective 'A Green Europe' and its first priority 'Healthy environment'; stresses that territorial development is key to building resilient regions and ensuring the sustainable implementation of cohesion policy funding;

29. Welcomes the European Economic and Social Committee's proposal to promote a Europe-wide charter of rural/urban rights and responsibilities; is also convinced that more cooperation with urban areas is needed to ensure that no area or citizen is 'left behind' in the just transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable and prosperous European Union, striving for a rural and urban commitment to a fair approach and showing the added value of rural and urban organisations working together;

30. Underlines the necessity of ensuring a more balanced development of EU regions by guaranteeing better distribution of EU funds, including common agricultural policy support, within and among Member States; emphasises that it is impossible to achieve sustainable and long-term territorial development if support is allocated to different regions based on historical data;

31. Notes that more and more people are choosing to live in cities and work in rural areas; calls on the Commission to design programmes that take all territories into account, including metropolitan, urban and functional areas; encourages the Commission to design LEADER in such a way that it can be used by small cities;

32. Calls on the Commission to connect the experience gained in the implementation of the TA2030 with the future cohesion policy and the recommendations of the High-Level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy in order to overcome territorial imbalances and functional mismatches in a more effective way; points out the opportunity presented by the TA2030 as a tool for assessing the impact of cohesion policy with regard to the objective of territorial cohesion;

33. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to carry out a coherent review of the TA2030 by the end of 2024, including a thorough review of its governance system, the progress made in its implementation and the relevance of its priorities, as outlined in the TA2030;

34. Welcomes the binding character of the methodology described in the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies giving territorial policies the same prominence as urban policies;

35. Calls for a single framework for strategies aimed at both urban and wider territorial development, treating territorial requirements as a whole; stresses that this could significantly reduce bureaucratic barriers in the acquisition of funds;

36. Calls on the Commission to ensure the proper implementation of funds and the implementation of territorial instruments, favouring efficient management without disproportionate bureaucracy; underlines the need to simplify access to funds by identifying 'one-stop shops' for potential beneficiaries of EU cohesion fund ITI or CLLD projects, in particular to access information about the type of financing, administrative requirements and eligibility;

37. Recognises the European Council's role in the development of the territorial activities of the Member States; calls on the Member States to provide for sufficient human resources for both managing authorities and implementation bodies in charge of ITIs or CLLDs, in order to ensure technical support and advisory services specifically for Local Action Groups and ITI partners and to enable compliance with the regulations;

38. Calls on the Commission to increase its involvement in territorial policy through cohesion policy and to strengthen the governance of regions in order to promote cohesion and micro-cohesion by covering the particularities of each region, improving decision-making at local and regional level and applying existing tools in order to improve the management of legislative instruments; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to continue to support cohesion policy funds in order to increase the resilience of territorial development, in particular to be able to cushion the effects of unexpected events, to protect regions from suffering the consequences and to uphold the principle of 'do no harm to cohesion';

39. Is aware of the influence of EU Semester decisions on territorial cohesion and, consequently, on the capacity to develop territorial programmes; reiterates, therefore, the need to strengthen the territorial dimension of the European Semester and to improve the correlation between cohesion policy and European economic governance, involving local and regional authorities at all stages of the procedures linked to the European Semester and the country-specific recommendations;

40. Calls on the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to play a more active role in the follow-up and further development of the TA2030; calls on the Commission to conduct a study of each region's capacity to cushion future global challenges affecting territorial cohesion; notes that this would provide a rapid response tool that would allow for flexibility in the allocation or reinforcement of resources, according to the real-time situation of the EU's regions;

41. Highlights the relevance of the territorial tools in terms of increased and inclusive participation of civil society and local and regional governments; calls on the Commission to explore new ways of raising further awareness on their rationale and of substantially increasing the use of ITIs and CLLDs, also by potentially earmarking a percentage to be used in the post-2027 cohesion policy framework;

42. Calls on the European Investment Bank to increase the financial allocation envisaged for cohesion policy funds dedicated to safeguarding the balance and proper functioning of regions;

43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.