

## I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

## RESOLUTIONS

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

104TH PLENARY SESSION, 28—29 NOVEMBER 2013

**Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on ‘Political priorities of the Committee of the Regions for 2014 based on the legislative and work programme of the European Commission’**

(2014/C 114/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- having regard to the European Commission’s Communication on its Work Programme for 2014<sup>(1)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2013 on the priorities of the Committee of the Regions for 2014 with a view to the work programme of the European Commission<sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to the Protocol of cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions signed on 16 February 2012,

**Main political priorities for 2014**

1. considers the main challenges for the European Union to be — generate sustainable growth, and ensure social, economic and territorial cohesion, create jobs and reinforce the citizen’s trust in the European project;
2. calls for a greater coordination of economic and social policies to help address the competitiveness gap between the Member States; reiterates the urgency of tackling youth unemployment and addressing the existing geographical inequalities between EU regions in order to prevent further loss of human capital;
3. calls for a thorough mid-term review of the EU 2020 strategy in 2014, based on the inclusion of: i) a territorial dimension, allowing for sub-national targets according to the different regional situations; ii) governance involving local and regional authorities in setting targets and implementing the strategy; iii) adequate funding for long-term investments, which should not be sacrificed to fiscal consolidation goals;
4. highlights the key importance of the democratic process in the European Union in the election year 2014 and will develop its contribution to the ongoing debate about the future of the Union in order to strengthen the role of local and regional authorities in the integration process; the CoR will therefore give impetus to any debate on Treaty reform through the organisation of political debates, and by better profiling the subsidiarity principle and the concept of multi-level-governance as important tools for attaining these objectives;
5. in view of the subsidiarity principle as a recognised means to ensure that political decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens, calls on the European Commission to better prove in its legislative proposals the added value of EU action; points to the contribution it will make to subsidiarity monitoring of EU initiatives included in the Commission’s 2014 Work Programme which have a local or regional dimension;

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2013) 739 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> CdR 4044/2013.

6. welcomes the Commission's focus on delivery and implementation and commits itself to contribute to the strengthening of the territorial dimension of the impact assessment.

#### ***Economic and Monetary Union***

7. underlines that the coordination of economic policies needs to be reinforced and therefore believes that the regional and local authorities should be involved in the European Semester process at Member State level and also calls for the CoR to be involved at the level of the EU institutions;

8. welcomes the recognition of the need to strengthen the EMU's social dimension in particular through the Commission's proposal for the establishment of a scoreboard of key employment and social indicators to be included in the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP); expects the Commission to address further the issue of the quality of public spending;

9. awaits the urgently needed Commission proposals to prepare the Banking Union through a reform of the European banking sector which would aim at improving corporate governance, allowing effective bank resolution and recovery, reinforcing bank capital, focussing on delivering credit to the real economy, and would entail a mandatory separation of banks' retail and investment activities;

10. supports all efforts leading to the completion of the Banking Union, taking into account its local and regional dimension and the key role of regional banks in providing capital for small and medium-sized businesses and public investment projects.

#### ***Growth, jobs and inclusion***

11. agrees with the European Commission that unemployment rates, particularly among young people, remain at levels that are economically and socially unsustainable. The Committee of the Regions calls on the Commission to include and to take into account the good practices of local and regional authorities in its proposals for stimulating youth employment; welcomes the key priority in combatting youth unemployment, which supposes a real threat to the European social model; notes the importance of Youth Guarantee, as a measure to ensure equal opportunities for youth in the labour market;

12. welcomes the Commission's announcement to present a labour mobility package focusing on better coordination between social security schemes across Member States; but considers that breaking the deadlock on the enforcement of Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers <sup>(3)</sup> is a prerequisite. This may entail revised measures to fight fraud, e. g. the suspension of the recognition of the A1 form. Also expects the future package to contain a legislative proposal on the information and consultation of workers in relation to anticipation and management of restructuring and to present proposals for an improved coordination of work accreditations;

13. supports the European Parliament in its efforts to review the Troika system in order to guarantee democratic scrutiny and its accountability;

14. calls on the European Commission and Member States to make use of the new MFF programmes to face demographic challenges, improve the conciliation of work and family life and promote social cohesion;

15. welcomes the efforts to modernise state aid policy with a view to better match it with the Europe 2020 Strategy and cut red tape, bearing in mind that the goal should be, as a priority, to improve the competitiveness of less developed regions in terms of industry and business and high level of unemployment. Reiterates however its request to the European Commission to be formally consulted on further draft guidelines on EU state aid rules and in particular on those currently under preparation in relation to infrastructure;

16. welcomes the foreseen European Accessibility Act and highlights that the accessibility of goods and services is a key factor for the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

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<sup>(3)</sup> Proposal for a Directive on the enforcement of Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services COM(2012) 131 final.

**Cohesion policy**

17. calls on the European Commission to promote and scrutinise the involvement of local and regional authorities in the finalization of the Partnership Agreements and the related Operational Programmes, on the basis of the application of the Regulations and of the 'Code of Conduct', and requests a report on this matter by February 2014. The Partnership Agreements must become the pivotal element of multilevel governance in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy or any European strategy for growth and jobs;

18. notes the increase of various uncoordinated EU initiatives affecting urban development policy; calls for the preparation of a White Paper on an integrated urban agenda for the EU and indicates its intention to be involved in this process;

19. commits itself to following closely the implementation of measures under the rural development pillar of the reformed Common Agricultural Policy, especially as regards the diversification and modernisation of economic activities in rural areas, and to support close cooperation between rural and urban municipalities through territorial functional partnerships;

20. urges the Member States and the Commission to assess the development of any new macro-regional strategies in view of the shared challenges and opportunities of the geographical areas in question and their European added value; stresses the importance of streamlining the current governance structures and strengthening the application of the multi-level governance principle.

**EU Budget**

21. reiterates its call for a reform of the present own resources system as provided for in the Treaty and as a means to reduce Member States' direct contributions to the EU budget, to increase transparency and to guarantee the sustainability of the EU finances; expects therefore the high-level group on own resources to be provided with a mandate allowing to present reform proposals in view of the mid-term review of the MFF;

22. commits to delivering an opinion on the execution of the EU budget, looking horizontally at the spending of EU funds from the perspective of local and regional authorities;

23. points out the lack of a consolidated vision of the budgetary means available to support the Europe 2020 strategy, reiterates that the synergy between EU, national and subnational budgets is essential to achieve the objectives set, expresses concerns with regard to the consequences of the crisis on the availability of financial resources to fund long-term investments, and requests the European Commission to explore this dimension in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy mid-term review.

**Agriculture and maritime policy**

24. calls on the European Commission to revise the Directive 2004/18/EC on the coordination of procedures for the award of public contracts so that 'locally produced' can be a standard selection criterion in tenders for the supply of food to, for instance, schools, nursing homes and public facilities<sup>(4)</sup>;

25. calls for careful evaluation of the territorial impact of all proposals to abolish market regulation mechanisms in agriculture, including bilateral trade agreements and association agreements, and to check whether these proposals are not at odds with the objective of territorial cohesion enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty.

**Transport**

26. requests to the European Commission to monitor the involvement of the regions and the local authorities in the governance platforms of the priority corridors of the Core Transport Network, and its support to the participation of these authorities in the preparation of projects with an impact in their territories or with a cross-border dimension;

27. it will participate actively in the initiatives of the European Commission related to the transport area which promote the use of efficient multimodal networks and contribute to consolidate the Single European Railway Area and the Single European Sky.

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<sup>(4)</sup> Cf. CdR 341/2010.

**Environment, climate change and energy**

28. calls on the European Commission to deliver an ambitious new climate and energy framework for the period up to 2030, including legally binding targets for greenhouse gases, energy efficiency and renewable energy;
29. calls for stable EU legislative frameworks in relation to access to justice in environmental matters and the protection of soil;
30. expects the European Commission's initiative on resource efficiency and waste not only to set resource efficiency indicators, but also targets based on these indicators;
31. calls on the European Commission to ensure that its 2014 review of waste legislation and of existing prevention, re-use, recycling, recovery and landfill diversion targets, as part of its resource efficiency and waste initiative, will take due account of the Committee's Outlook Opinion requested by the European Commission; the review should live up to the 'aspirational targets' set out in the Resource Efficiency Roadmap paving the way towards an economy based on re-use and recycling; demands that in the context of the 2014 review attention be placed on plastic waste, taking due account of the Committee's Opinion on the subject;
32. expects the European Commission to propose an ambitious agenda for the implementation of a fully integrated and competitive internal market in energy; asks the European Commission to promote measures that facilitate the spread of micro-production of energy and its integration into the distribution grids and to ensure in this process that the consumers in the retail market can fully benefit from affordable energy and that sustainable energy investment at the local and regional level is facilitated by modernised state aid rules in the field of energy; at the request of the Greek presidency will outline proposals for an EU strategy on affordable energy for all;
33. calls on the European Commission to supervise that, in the energy sector, the regulatory framework at national level remains stable and aligned with the objectives established by the Europe 2020 strategy;
34. looks forward to the European Commission's proposals for the necessary legal framework on shale gas/tight gas to guarantee the safety and sustainability of the exploration of unconventional hydrocarbons in the European Union.

**Research and innovation**

35. awaits with interest the Commission's initiative on 'Research and innovation as new sources of growth' and its assessment of how the innovation economy promotes competitiveness and provides an evidence base for identifying priority investments to be co-financed by Horizon 2020;
36. will continue to be actively involved in the Smart Specialisation Platform and related projects in the regions and will follow up on the next phase of designing and implementation of the smart specialisation strategies in the regions.

**ICT**

37. welcomes the focus placed on the digital economy, innovation and services, and calls on the Council and the Commission to take forward this agenda so as to incentivise investments in this field, complete the Digital Single Market by 2015, and launch measures to improve skills and reduce the digital gap among Member States regions. Commits itself to promote the modernisation of local and regional public administrations in the provision of services such as e-government, e-health, e-invoicing and e-procurement.

**Education, culture and tourism**

38. places great importance on ensuring that the future Erasmus + provides adequate support and equal opportunities for all target groups from previous programmes and will continue to follow the aspects of funding distribution and programme management. The CoR — will support further measures to boost young people's employability such as the proposal for a Quality Framework for Traineeships and initiatives aimed at modernisation of school policies and the teaching professions; awaits proposals by the European Commission for the establishment of a genuine European Area of Skills and Qualifications;

39. reiterates its request for a communication on sustainable and competitive cultural tourism in the EU, maintaining that a clear strategic framework in this field could be highly beneficial for the development of local small and medium-sized businesses, promotion and preservation of diverse European heritage and further integration of European citizens.

***Area of Freedom, Security, Justice and Citizens' rights***

40. looks forward to the European Commission's response to the first batch of successful citizens' initiatives and reiterates its offer to assist the European Commission in their evaluation and to participate in the public hearings organised at the European Parliament;

41. awaits the proposals by the European Commission for the follow-up to the Stockholm programme and will formulate its own expectations towards the future development of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice;

42. calls for comprehensive EU policies to address migration, mobility and asylum based on the respect of individuals' fundamental rights and freedoms and capable of protecting EU borders, intensifying the fight against human trafficking and illegal immigration, enhancing cooperation with third countries of origin and transit and building genuine solidarity between the EU Member States as well as between local and regional authorities; in particular calls for the revision of the Dublin II regulation in order to allow for a fair redistribution of asylum seekers across the Member States; these considerations should also apply to the projected EU Maritime Security Strategy;

43. intends to contribute to setting up priority actions, as requested by the European Council, to reinforce the European strategy on migration and integration of migrants; considers in that respect that the management of migration flows, particularly in the Mediterranean, should be developed in a comprehensive way in order to promote sustainable solutions involving all the stakeholders, notably third countries, EU Member States as well as regional and local authorities.

***Europe as a global actor***

44. will continue the effort to empower the local and regional authorities from candidate and potential candidate countries within the accession process; draws the attention to the work and opportunities offered by the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) in strengthening democracy through economic, social and territorial cooperation in Europe's neighbourhood;

45. welcomes the Commission's reiterated commitment to support the democratic transition process in the Mediterranean partner countries and recalls that ownership on all levels is needed for a successful transition; stands ready to support efforts of decentralisation as a tool for the formulation and implementation of local and regional public policies to increase economic growth, social and territorial cohesion;

46. welcomes the proposal and the emerging decision on a European Year for Development 2015 to secure the follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals and launch the new international agenda for sustainable development; reiterates the need for local and regional authorities to be fully involved in the implementation of both the future post-2015 agenda and the European Year for Development 2015; reiterates therefore its request that the budget provides for adequate financial support to local and regional authorities' initiatives.

Brussels, 29 November 2013

*The President  
of the Committee of the Regions*  
Ramón Luis VALCÁRCEL SISO

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