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P8\_TA(2018)0254

## Cohesion policy and the circular economy

### European Parliament resolution of 13 June 2018 on cohesion policy and the circular economy (2017/2211(INI))

(2020/C 28/04)

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Article 3, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Articles 4, 11, 174 to 178, 191 and 349 thereof,
- having regard to the Paris Agreement, Decision 1/CP.21 and the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UNFCCC, and the 11th Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP11) held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 11 December 2015,
- having regard to Articles 7(2) and 11(2) of the Paris Agreement, which recognise the local, subnational and regional dimensions of climate change and climate action,
- having regard to the new UN Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular goal 7: to ‘ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all’ and goal 11: to ‘make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’,
- 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 <sup>(1)</sup> (hereinafter ‘the Common Provisions Regulation’),
- having regard to 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 <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 <sup>(3)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal <sup>(4)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) as regards the clarification, simplification and improvement of the establishment and functioning of such groupings <sup>(5)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1300/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006 <sup>(6)</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 <sup>(7)</sup>,

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 289.

<sup>(3)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 470.

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 259.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 303.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 281.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 January 2018 entitled ‘Monitoring framework for the circular economy’ (COM(2018)0029),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 January 2017 entitled ‘The role of waste-to-energy in the circular economy’ (COM(2017)0034),
- having regard to the Commission report of 26 January 2017 on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan (COM(2017)0033),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 December 2015 entitled ‘Investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds’ (COM(2015)0639),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 December 2015 entitled ‘Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy’ (COM(2015)0614),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2014 entitled ‘Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe’ (COM(2014)0398),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 2 July 2014 entitled ‘Green Action Plan for SMEs: Enabling SMEs to turn environmental challenges into business opportunities’ (COM(2014)0440),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 13 February 2012 entitled ‘Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe’ (COM(2012)0060),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 July 2012 on ‘Smart Cities and Communities – European Innovation Partnership’ (C(2012)4701),
- having regard to the study commissioned by the Commission of December 2017 entitled ‘Integration of environmental concerns in Cohesion Policy Funds (ERDF, ESF, CF) – Results, evolution and trends through three programming periods (2000-2006, 2007-2013, 2014-2020)’,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2017 on investing in jobs and growth – maximising the contribution of European Structural and Investment Funds: an evaluation of the report under Article 16(3) of the Common Provisions Regulation <sup>(8)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 September 2016 on European Territorial Cooperation – best practices and innovative measures <sup>(9)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2016 on synergies for innovation: the European Structural and Investment Funds, Horizon 2020 and other European innovation funds and EU programmes <sup>(10)</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 July 2015 on resource efficiency: moving towards a circular economy <sup>(11)</sup>,

<sup>(8)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2017)0053.

<sup>(9)</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0321.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 101, 16.3.2018, p. 111.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 265, 11.8.2017, p. 65.

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- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2015 on green growth opportunities for SMEs <sup>(12)</sup>,
  - having regard to the Smart Islands Declaration of 28 March 2017,
  - having regard to Rule 52 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,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A8-0184/2018),
- A. whereas local and regional authorities, which are the most conversant with the local and regional issues and are key actors for an effective implementation of cohesion policy, are also at the forefront of the transition to a circular economy; whereas a European multi-level governance model, built on active and constructive co-operation between the different levels of governance and stakeholders, together with adequate information and active involvement of citizens, is key to the achievement of this shift;
- B. whereas cities represent just 3 % of the Earth's surface but house more than half of the world population, consume over 75 % of the global resources, and emit 60-80 % of greenhouse gas emissions and whereas 70 % of the global population is expected to move to cities by 2050;
- C. whereas the transition to a stronger, more circular economy is both a great opportunity and a challenge for the EU, its Member States and its citizens, to modernise the European economy and guide it in a more sustainable direction; whereas it is, in particular, an opportunity for all European regions and local authorities, which are the tier of government closest to local communities; whereas it brings possibilities for development and growth to the European regions and can help them build a sustainable model that achieves economic development, transform existing sectors, improve their balances of trade and industrial competitiveness with enhanced productivity, create new, high quality, well-paid jobs and new value chains;
- D. whereas around 60 % of EU waste is currently not recycled and whereas great cost benefits and business opportunities could be created from exploring and introducing new circular business models for the benefit of EU SMEs;
- E. whereas achieving the Paris Agreement targets requires a shift to a more circular economy and is a vital contribution to the development of an economic model that has not only profit as its goal, but also protection of the environment;
- F. whereas cohesion policy offers not only investment opportunities to respond to local and regional needs through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), but also an integrated policy framework to reduce developmental disparities between the European regions and to help them address the multiple challenges to their development, including through support for resource efficiency and sustainable development, as well as territorial cooperation and capacity building and also to attract and promote private investment;
- G. whereas the current legislative framework for cohesion policy does not mention the transition to a circular economy as an objective, and whereas sustainable development is a horizontal principle for the use of the ESI Funds, as defined in Article 8 of the Common Provisions Regulation as well as in the Common Strategic Framework (Annex I), which will enable the link between existing instruments in support of circular economy projects to be strengthened;
- H. whereas many of the thematic objectives set for the ESI Funds to comply with the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as the related ex ante conditionalities, are relevant to the objectives of a circular economy;
- I. whereas Article 6 of the Common Provisions Regulation makes it mandatory for operations supported by the ESI Funds to comply with applicable Union law and national law relating to the application of Union law, including especially environmental law;

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<sup>(12)</sup> OJ C 353, 27.9.2016, p. 27.

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- J. whereas one of the aims of the circular economy is to reduce waste going to landfill and whereas the securing and remediation of legal and illegal landfills in the Member States should be regarded as an absolute priority;
- K. whereas China banned imports of scrap plastics and unsorted paper waste from 1 January 2018, and whereas that ban will create recycling challenges for the Union, which will need to be dealt with at regional and local levels;

***Role of cohesion policy in promoting the circular economy***

1. Welcomes the efforts of the Commission to support the circular economy through cohesion policy, notably via outreach activities to assist EU Member States and regions in the uptake of cohesion policy funds for the circular economy;
2. Notes that, according to the Commission report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan, EU support for the 2014-2020 period for innovation, SMEs, the low-carbon economy and environmental protection amounts to EUR 150 billion and many of these areas are contributing to the achievement of a circular economy;
3. Notes that the analysis of the outcome of the negotiations concerning the partnership agreements and European Social Fund (ESF) operational programmes for the current programming period showed that the ESF has been used to support actions for introducing greener models of labour organisation, and actions in the green sector;
4. Notes, however, that, as underlined in a study commissioned by the Commission, the current policy framework does not allow the full contribution of cohesion policy to the circular economy to be captured; in this respect, points to the fact that the definition of the existing 'Intervention Field' categories used for financial allocations does not cover the circular economy as such;
5. Urges the Commission to implement the planned circular economy measures, observing good regulatory practice, and stresses the need to monitor the implementing measures;
6. Stresses the need to implement the Commission's commitment to a monitoring framework for the circular economy<sup>(13)</sup> with a view to increasing and evaluating progress achieved in the transition to a circular economy at EU and Member State level, while reducing the administrative burden;
7. Calls on the Commission to take extraordinary action to remediate areas used for the illegal discharge and landfill of hazardous waste, which is adversely affecting the health and economic and social well-being of the populations concerned;
8. Underlines the role played by the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020 and by the LIFE Programme 2014-2020 in funding innovative projects and in supporting waste reduction, recycling and reuse projects which are relevant to the circular economy;
9. Appreciates that several regions have used their smart specialisation strategies to set priorities related to the circular economy and guide their investments in research and innovation through cohesion policy towards this objective, playing a fundamental role in supporting investments and infrastructure that meet the needs of SMEs; calls on the regional authorities to use this good practice as a common modus operandi and to implement these smart specialisation strategies;
10. Welcomes the creation of a European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre for SMEs, as well as the Circular Economy Finance Support Platform;
11. Reiterates its view that the circular economy goes beyond waste management and includes areas such as green jobs; renewable energy; resource efficiency; the bio-economy; agriculture and fisheries policies, with their bio-based industries aiming to replace fossil fuels; water management; energy efficiency; food waste; marine litter; air quality improvement; research and development and innovation in related fields; acknowledges, however, that waste infrastructure is a crucial element for reducing linear patterns of production and consumption and that it is necessary to support innovations in the field of eco-design in order to reduce levels of plastic waste;

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<sup>(13)</sup> Commission communication of 16 January 2018 entitled 'Monitoring framework for the circular economy' (COM(2018)0029).

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12. Recalls that the basic problem that must be resolved first is the secondary materials market, as if raw materials cost less than recycled ones it is clear that the drive towards the green economy has slowed down considerably and that the use of structural funds could be lost in a vicious circle; considers, in this context, that certain ad hoc laws (such as the upcoming Commission proposal on single-use plastic products) and appropriate EU-level taxation as part of the own resources of the next multiannual financial framework can make a decisive contribution to moving towards a circular economy;

13. Emphasises the fact that on average recycled materials only satisfy around 10 % of the EU demand for materials; recognises, with regard to new developments on global markets, especially China's recent ban on scrap plastics and unsorted paper waste, the new potential for regions and local communities to invest into recycling infrastructure, create new green jobs and tackle the current challenges that the EU faces;

14. Highlights the existence and importance of the ex-ante conditionalities on ESI Funds related to, in particular, the objective of preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency; points especially to the one on 'promoting economically and environmentally sustainable investments in the waste sector'; regrets, however, the negligence of waste hierarchy and lack of sound environmental assessment of long-term outcomes of investments under the ESI Funds;

15. Calls for coordination and greater cooperation between regions, SMEs and other public/private entities in order to launch new smart specialisation thematic platforms, in particular between the agri-food, energy and industrial sectors;

16. Emphasises the importance of applying waste hierarchy as a prerequisite for achieving a circular economy, as well as the need for greater transparency in the supply chain, so that end-of-life products and materials can be monitored and recovered efficiently; furthermore recognises a negative trend of investment of ESI Funds into lower levels of the waste hierarchy, in particular mechanical biological treatment (MBT) facilities and incineration, which in some cases leads to overcapacities and long-term technological lock-in, thus jeopardising the achievement of EU recycling targets; recalls that encouraging the business community to follow the hierarchy should generate additional materials in the resource stream as well as offering potential outlets for their use in manufacturing;

17. Recalls the new waste targets for 2025, 2030 and 2035 established in the review of EU waste legislation and underlines that the achievement of these targets requires political commitment at the national, regional and local levels as well as economic investments; calls on the Member States to make full use of available Union funds in support of such investments and underlines that these will generate significant returns in terms of economic growth and job creation;

18. Underlines the importance of regional projects to process residual waste that is entirely non-recyclable for the purpose of producing sustainable second-generation biofuels, after careful separation or separate collection in line with the waste hierarchy;

19. Calls on the Commission to ensure that all definitions relating to waste comply with the Waste Framework Directive and that comparable data are available on progress made by Member States and local and regional authorities;

20. Underlines the importance of the Urban Innovative Actions initiative, which has so far approved eight innovative circular economy projects in urban authorities for ERDF funding and calls on the Commission to monitor and evaluate their implementation in order to formulate wider circular economy policies;

### ***The circular economy as a driver for sustainable and regional development***

21. Stresses the importance of the partnership principle and the important role of all stakeholders, in particular regional and local authorities and the non-governmental sector, including SMEs and social economy enterprises, during the drawing-up of partnership agreements and operational programmes; calls for a genuine involvement of partners in policy processes, with the creation of cross-cutting partnerships, and for circular economy-related objectives to be adequately incorporated into programming documents; encourages the Member States to develop their own national strategies in this field in coordination with the EU approach to the circular economy; points to the leading role that local government can play in achieving the circular economy;

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22. Stresses the importance of the role of public-private partnerships in the design and planning of new products and services that take life cycle into account, with a view to implementing the four design models that could be used under a circular economy: designing for longevity; designing for leasing/service; designing for reuse in manufacture; designing for materials recovery;
23. Stresses the need to change and adapt the current strategies and market models to accompany the regions in the transition towards this more sustainable form of economy, while at the same time boosting economic, industrial and environmental competitiveness;
24. Calls for the implementation of the circular economy within the framework of the coordinated multilevel governance and partnership principle, with full transparency, the involvement of local communities and broad public participation;
25. Highlights the need to promote greater cooperation between all the stakeholders involved in circular economy processes;
26. Notes that projects related to the circular economy which have received cohesion policy support have brought greater benefits to more developed regions; recognises the limited administrative capacity of less developed regions and therefore calls on the Member States' national authorities and the Commission to use all existing possibilities to provide expert assistance and to strengthen the capacity of these regions to help them increase their efforts, and to create conditions for achieving technological leapfrogging by implementing more projects that meet circular economy principles and by developing partnerships and closer cooperation with stakeholders such as materials experts, chemists, manufacturers and recyclers, particularly within the framework of the 'Industry 2020 in the circular economy' initiative;
27. Emphasises the estimates that a shift to biological raw materials and biological processing methods could save up to 2,5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year by 2030, thus increasing markets for bio-based raw materials and new consumer products several-fold; underlines the utmost importance of sustainable management of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity while transforming resources into bio-based products, materials and fuels;
28. Considers that the bioeconomy is essential for regional and local development, since it increases cohesion between regions through its potential to create jobs and growth in rural areas; calls for greater use to be made of ESI Funds for the implementation of existing innovations, through policies to encourage stakeholders, while further fostering innovation in the development of bio-based, biodegradable, recyclable and compostable materials produced from sustainably managed biofeed stocks; recalls that consistent implementation of the bioeconomy may also solve the problem of food waste; calls for better cooperation between national, regional and local authorities in creating systems and platforms that connect different actors from the food production, transportation, retail, consumer and waste sectors, as well as other concerned stakeholders, thus achieving greater synergies to create efficient solutions;
29. Points out that, in addition to local, regional and national authorities, incentives should also be given to consumers themselves, who should be constantly informed and encouraged to change their consumer behaviour in respect of waste management and production, recycling and issues involving sustainable solutions in their everyday lives;
30. Calls for better, easier and more transparent access to finance for local and regional authorities, including through the strengthening of their administrative capacities and through heightened cooperation with the EIB, within the framework of the European Investment Advisory Hub, to enable increased investments in green jobs, waste management, smart specialisation, further development of rural areas including as regards the necessary infrastructure and environmentally friendly technologies, the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and the local energy transition, including energy efficiency, decentralised distribution of energy, clean energy innovation and the circular economy; welcomes the fact that the EIB has provided over the past five years about EUR 2,4 billion in co-financing for circular economy projects for waste management, water management or agricultural research and development; stresses the importance of better coordination of the ESI Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) in the field of the circular economy, also with a view to ensuring that programmes include a regional approach and make better use of regional potential for sustainable energy sources;

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31. Calls on Member States, regions and local authorities to encourage the establishment of and support for reuse and repair networks, in particular those operating as social economy enterprises, to extend the life of products through reuse, repair and reutilisation, by facilitating the access of such networks to waste collection points, and by promoting the use of ESI Funds, economic instruments, procurement criteria, or other measures in this sense;

32. Stresses that the life cycle sustainability of reuse and recycling also depends on energy consumption in transport; underlines that this applies particularly to rural areas where longer distances between points of collection and processing sites have to be covered; urges the Commission, the Member States and regional authorities to take the life cycle approach into account in their circular economy strategies for rural areas in order to avoid negative overall environmental and climate impacts;

33. Points out that, out of a sample of 32 operational programmes reviewed for a study on the integration of environmental concerns in cohesion policy funds, nine address the circular economy and six green jobs; welcomes the existing efforts made by national and regional authorities but at the same time calls on Member States to better integrate the circular economy in their operational and regional programmes and partnership agreements; urges that support be granted to the regions to ensure as smooth as possible a transition to the circular economy;

34. Calls on the Member States to ensure that the circular economy is suitably incorporated into educational programmes and vocational training and re-training as an interdisciplinary subject so as to shape new attitudes which will then help to define new business models and create new jobs;

35. Calls on the national and regional authorities in charge of preparing operational programmes to more closely integrate the circular economy into territorial cooperation programmes, particularly in cross-border cooperation programmes, in order to implement cross-border solutions that can generate more efficient and cheaper results;

36. Believes that the future planning of ESI Funds in the next programming period should be better coordinated with the national energy and climate plans for 2030, by using similar indicators to the ones contained in the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union when possible; asks for an ambitious and coherent strategy for Member States in order to fulfil the already existing mandatory targets at EU level on climate mitigation;

37. Calls on Member States to seize the opportunity to further integrate the circular economy into their current operational programmes during the period of revision; believes that Commission should facilitate this process while providing assistance to Member States in analysis of the current state of play and possible areas where the circular economy and its principles could be applied and added;

38. Considers that the role of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) in addressing challenges related to the implementation of the circular economy should be further enhanced; calls on Member States to foster cross-border cooperation, in particular through ETC, to implement circular economy projects; furthermore, stresses the importance of finding sustainable solutions through pre-accession agreements with non-Member States to tackle the ongoing challenges, especially in the domain of air pollution;

39. Stresses the untapped potential of the on-going macro-regional strategies to help address challenges related to the implementation of the circular economy, not only in the Member States but also in third countries located in the same geographical area; stresses that those strategies should focus on priorities that would support the creation of a market for secondary raw materials for the Union; calls for the development of EU cooperation initiatives with neighbouring countries;

40. Reiterates its views on the importance of adequate capacity building and maintenance in local, regional and national public authorities, which is also highly relevant for the transition to a circular economy; points to the important role technical assistance can play in this field; recognises that regions and urban areas play a vital role in promoting ownership of the bottom-up energy transition and are most suitable for testing and implementing integrated energy solutions in direct connection to citizens; stresses the role that 'smart cities' initiatives can play in the circular economy by promoting green technology models as part of sustainable urban development strategies; underlines that sustainable and 'circular' cities are an instrument for an effective circular economy;

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41. Stresses the importance of Green Public Procurement as a driver of the circular economy, with a potential market of an estimated EUR 1,8 trillion annually delivering public works, goods and services <sup>(14)</sup>;
42. Stresses the need for an energy regulatory framework that encourages citizens and energy communities to participate in the energy transition through the right to self-produce and consume, as well as through continued support schemes, guaranteed priority grid access and priority dispatch for renewable energy;
43. Encourages regional and local authorities to further invest in educational programmes, in vocational training and requalification of workers, as well as in public awareness-raising campaigns about the benefits and advantages of all actions with the aim of implementing the circular economy through cohesion policy projects, thus increasing citizen participation and influencing consumer behaviour; underlines, in this connection, the potential of the ESF; stresses that it must encourage young entrepreneurs to move towards the circular economy, especially in regions with low levels of income and growth; underlines also that the circular economy is an opportunity for rural areas to counter depopulation, to diversify their economies and to gain security against risks; points out, in this respect, that rural areas are in need of incentives for the transition to sustainable value chains; stresses the importance of developing a specific strategy for island regions;
44. Encourages the Commission to promote the use of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) to help local stakeholders combine funding streams and plan local initiatives targeted at the circular economy;
45. Notes that 80 % of marine litter is from land-based sources; thus emphasises the importance of tackling of land and marine littering through local and regional action that has both environmental and human-health benefits; calls on Member States, regions and local authorities to focus their efforts on preventing the generation of land litter;
46. Calls on the Commission to consider, in the context of the European Semester, the impact on the calculation of government deficits of regional and national investments co-financed through ESI Funds in projects related to the circular economy;
47. Welcomes the proposal to revise Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC, which will facilitate the transition to a circular economy by reducing plastic waste from bottled water, involving major energy savings and efficient management of drinking water resources;

#### ***The circular economy in post-2020 cohesion policy***

48. Calls on the Commission, for the next programming period, to develop a relevant tracking methodology with appropriate indicators to allow for a better monitoring of the contribution of cohesion policy to the achievement of a circular economy in order to offer a more precise picture of environmental and socio-economic conditions;
49. Points out that considerable support for the completion of the transition to a circular economy is also being provided by other programmes, such as LIFE, COSME and Horizon 2020; stresses the need to improve synergies between the above-mentioned instruments in order to achieve the goals set out in the Commission's Circular Economy Action Plan;
50. Calls on the Commission, in the context of the new legislative proposals for the future cohesion policy framework, to develop appropriate ex-ante conditionalities related to the achievement of a circular economy; considers that circular economy strategies should be developed in partnership with the national, regional and local authorities and economic and social partners;
51. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the Horizon 2020 programme devotes even greater attention and funding to innovation and research projects in the area of the circular economy;
52. Stresses the importance of stepping up cohesion policy support for sustainable urban and rural development, and calls for a more prominent role to be given to circular economy-related objectives in this context; calls for innovative urban and rural actions in this field to be continued and calls on the Commission to make maximum use of lessons learnt in the 2014-2020 period when preparing proposals for the future; calls for a flexible, tailor-made approach in the implementation of the Urban Agenda, providing incentives and guidance to fully seize the potentials of cities in implementing the circular economy;

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<sup>(14)</sup> 'Buying green! – A handbook on green public procurement', 3rd Edition, European Commission, 2016.

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53. Calls on the Commission to make the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform a place to exchange best practices to make the best possible use of cohesion policy resources for the transition to a circular economy;

54. Emphasises the interdependence of the circular economy and climate mitigation, and thus calls for greater spending in circular economy- and climate-related investments in post-2020 cohesion policy; moreover stresses that in the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) climate-related expenditure in general should be increased in comparison with the current one;

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55. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

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