

# Official Journal of the European Union

C 120



English edition

## Information and Notices

Volume 59

5 April 2016

### Contents

#### I *Resolutions, recommendations and opinions*

##### RESOLUTIONS

###### **Committee of the Regions**

###### **116th. plenary session, 10 and 11 February 2016**

2016/C 120/01	Resolution on the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey 2016 . . . . .	1
2016/C 120/02	Resolution on the Threats to the EU's Schengen Border-free Area . . . . .	4

##### OPINIONS

###### **Committee of the Regions**

###### **116th. plenary session, 10 and 11 February 2016**

2016/C 120/03	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Age-friendly tourism . . . . .	6
2016/C 120/04	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Innovation and modernisation of the rural economy . . . . .	10
2016/C 120/05	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Indicators for territorial development — GDP and beyond . . . . .	16
2016/C 120/06	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) . . . . .	22

##### Preparatory acts

##### COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

###### **116th. plenary session, 10 and 11 February 2016**

2016/C 120/07	Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — The integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market . . . . .	27
---------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

EN



## I

*(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)*

## RESOLUTIONS

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

116TH. PLENARY SESSION, 10 AND 11 FEBRUARY 2016

**Resolution on the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey 2016**

(2016/C 120/01)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

- having regard to the European Commission's Communication on the Annual Growth Survey 2016 and to the start of the 2016 European Semester <sup>(1)</sup>;
- having regard to the European Parliament's (draft) report on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: Annual Growth Survey 2016 (2015/2285(INI))

**Re-launching investments**

1. stresses that growth and employment in the EU are weakened by the post-crisis investment gap, which harms competitiveness and threatens economic, social and territorial cohesion; is concerned that an extended period of low investment is curbing long-term potential for employment growth and is lowering the quality of these new jobs;
2. notes that budget cuts hit public investments in infrastructure, as confirmed by a recent joint CoR-OECD survey <sup>(2)</sup>, as well as in education, vocational training, healthcare, social services, childcare and housing services, at a time when private investment is discouraged by low expectations on the pace of economic activity;
3. stresses the need to remove obstacles to private and public investments by completing the internal market, in particular in the services sector, implementing structural reforms that aim to create good-quality jobs and to fight inequality, improving the regulatory and business environment, combating fraud and the shadow economy, encouraging entrepreneurship. In this regard, underlines the importance of the effective and efficient use of EU Funds in partnership with the private sector so that public and private funds are able to collectively deliver positive impact on the ground. Considering the European Commission's intention to engage in a dialogue with the Member States on the identification of such obstacles, stresses the need to specifically analyse them at all government levels and to involve the CoR in this process;

---

<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2015) 700 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> OECD-COR Consultation of sub-national governments on 'Infrastructure planning and investment across levels of government: current challenges and possible solutions' (November 2015).

4. encourages EU Member States to involve their local and regional authorities in making the most of the Structural Funds, which account for approximately 14 % of total public investment on average but with a share beyond 50 % in nine Member States, as well as the Investment Plan for Europe (European Fund for Strategic Investments), which must be implemented flexibly and in a way that complements the Structural Funds, so that the full public and private investment potential can be harnessed;

5. supports a process of upward economic and social convergence, yet underlines that social, economic and territorial disparities will only be overcome through a territorial vision that would enable us to achieve a more bottom-up approach by combining a place-based policy approach with a territorial dimension of the revised Europe 2020 strategy and a result-oriented EU cohesion policy;

#### **Pursuing structural reforms**

6. notes that the proposed Structural Reforms Support Programme (SRSP) should, after having been subject to an ordinary legislative procedure, be available to national, regional and local authorities according to the current division of powers in Member States; stresses that the implementation of the SRSP should not reduce the financial endowment of the ESIF;

7. stresses that building up efficient administrative capacity at all levels of government, including local and regional authorities, is of paramount importance to deliver on re-launching long-term investments, structural reforms and responsible and effective spending;

#### **Implementing responsible fiscal policies**

8. stresses the importance of each Member State having sound economic policies and stable public finances, as a prerequisite for necessary short and long-term public investments;

9. considers that the AGS 2016 provides strong arguments for the Commission to look at proposing a fiscal capacity for the European Union as a whole to implement anti-cyclical policies and accelerate the recovery. Such a fiscal capacity would have to respect the subsidiarity principle and make sure that enough flexibility is provided for implementing policies that are appropriate to local needs by involving local and regional authorities in the design of policies;

10. reiterates its call for a golden rule for public accounting to keep long-term investments separate from current expenditure; to this effect reiterates its calls on the European Commission to present a White Paper building on the OECD principles for effective public investments across levels of government and setting out an EU-level typology for quality of public investment in the accounts of public expenditure according to its long-term effect; calls for a decrease in current expenditure in order to reduce the tax burden and so spur on private investment;

11. recalls its proposal for an indicator relating to the investment rate to be included in the assessment of macroeconomic imbalances;

12. stresses the need for flexibility in the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact and the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union so that the investment capacity by local and regional authorities is encouraged and not restricted. Following on its Communication of January 2015, the Committee expects the Commission to put forward further concrete proposals to take this aspect into account in the implementation or possible review of these agreements;

#### **Review of the Europe 2020 strategy and new approach to sustainable development beyond 2020**

13. welcomes the acknowledgment of the Europe 2020 strategy as a long-term multi-level policy framework; stresses the importance of giving the strategy a territorial dimension; announces that the CoR will consult local and regional authorities to help identifying indicators and targets of the revised Europe 2020 strategy as well as on the longer term strategy beyond 2020 announced by the European Commission in 2016. A new flagship initiative on demographic challenges is proposed for inclusion, a cross-cutting instrument to enable all regions that have to cope with different demographic challenges to experience smart, sustainable and inclusive growth;

**The European Semester**

14. stresses that National Reform Programmes and Country-specific Recommendations should include a territorial dimension to maximise growth and reduce territorial disparities;
15. reiterates its invitation to the Commission and the Parliament to adopt a Code of Conduct to ensure the structured involvement of the local and regional authorities in the European Semester; reiterates its commitment to make a concrete proposal on this issue in 2016; commits to engage in a regular dialogue with the European Commission, in particular in the European part of the Semester process;
16. welcomes the intention to better integrate the Euro area and national dimensions of the EU economic governance by presenting the 2016 Annual Growth Survey together with the Euro area recommendations at the beginning of the 2016 European semester cycle;
17. supports the European Parliament's call for inclusion of the Single Market (SM) pillar in the European Semester, with a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of SM integration comprising a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators, benchmarking, peer review and exchange of best practices;
18. welcomes the fact that the Commission's Annual Growth Survey (AGS) adds three social indicators (activity rate, youth unemployment and long-term unemployment) in the 2016 Alert Mechanism Report reflecting thereby the objectives set in Article 9 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
19. instructs the President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the President of the European Council.

Brussels, 10 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Markku MARKKULA

---

**Resolution on the Threats to the EU's Schengen Border-free Area**

(2016/C 120/02)

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

- having regard to the ongoing extraordinary migration situation;
- having regard to the aim, enshrined in Articles 3 TEU and 67 TFEU, of offering EU citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers;
- having regard to Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights guaranteeing the right to asylum, as well as the relevant national and international obligations of the EU Member States;

1. recalls that the Schengen Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons, currently comprising 26 countries, of which 22 are EU Member States, represents one of the most successful pillars in the construction of the European Union. The Schengen Agreement as incorporated into the EU Treaties is inextricably linked to the Single Market and is a crucial element of the four freedoms of movement — of goods, services, persons and capital — within the European Union;

2. points out that the freedoms of movement and the abolition of internal frontiers are key achievements of European integration which not only have an important economic, social and territorial impact, but also have significant symbolic value for the EU and its citizens as they are directly linked to the project of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe;

3. stresses that open internal borders are the backbone of the European economy. Considering that trade among the EU Member States is worth EUR 2 800 billion, involves 1,7 million cross-border workers and 57 million annual cross-border road transport movements, the CoR underlines that changing the conditions for mobility and exchanges within the Schengen area would have very significant consequences for employment and investments in many European countries; underlines that an EU area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders is dependent on the appropriate and joint protection of the area's external borders;

4. emphasises that local and regional authorities all over the European Union benefit from the absence of internal borders in terms of economic development, social and cultural exchanges, cross-border cooperation and particularly the implementation of European Territorial Cooperation programmes and the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation;

5. underlines that the use of the limitation clauses in the Schengen Agreement and the resulting restriction on the freedom of movement could have particularly negative consequences for the key objectives of cross-border cooperation projects;

6. acknowledges the enormous challenge which the EU and its Member States as well as their regions, cities and municipalities are facing due to the large numbers of refugees in need of international protection, as well as economic migrants seeking irregular entry into the EU; restates the need to make sure that those entering the EU do so legally, and that this involves a strict, quick and efficient registration procedure in respect of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and stresses that more resources should be allocated to secure the EU's external borders and to ensure that people entering the EU do so in a legally organised way; also notes the need for comprehensive efforts and reforms to ensure that migrants arriving in Europe can begin to work and integrate; stresses that Schengen external border controls must be carried out in a manner that is consistent with the Member States' international obligations to refugees and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, including the rights to human dignity and non-discrimination;

7. notes that the current problems in the Schengen system are partly the result of the lack of coordination and resources for managing the large numbers of refugees and migrants arriving, the lack of appropriate political messages about entering via legal channels using border crossing points, as well as the insufficient involvement of local and regional authorities;

8. emphasises that protecting the values of the Schengen Agreement and preserving the stability of the Schengen area are top priorities; furthermore, it is necessary to regain control over the EU's external borders and to reinforce border management capacities; underlines that immediate measures are needed to develop a system in order to track the movement of irregular migrants in the Schengen area, thereby preventing them from disappearing from the authorities; notes that the process of returning asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected and readmitting them to their country of origin should be accelerated;
9. stresses that this challenge requires joint solutions based on mutual cooperation between all levels of governance, as uncoordinated policy responses have serious effects on other Member States and their regions and cities, exacerbating the overall problems and undermining citizens' confidence, which has already been sorely tested; stresses in this context that blaming individual countries or institutions for the current situation and threatening members of the Schengen area with exclusion will not contribute to a lasting solution and could constitute a dangerous precedent with extremely harmful consequences in the long run for the European project; notes also that the exclusion of a Member State is not currently provided for in the Schengen Agreement;
10. expresses deep concern about the ongoing difficulties in enforcing jointly agreed rules under the EU Treaties in terms of external border protection, enhanced measures to prevent and combat illegal migration and trafficking of human beings, effective return policies, common standards for the reception and registration of refugees and asylum seekers, and the implementation of a common migration policy;
11. is convinced that jeopardising Schengen's political, economic and social success by permanently reintroducing border controls cannot be the answer to EU citizens' requests for more security and the protection of their standard of living; at the same time, considers it crucially important to provide citizens with immediate, practical and responsible responses;
12. calls, therefore, on the EU Member States, as well as the EU institutions, to swiftly adopt a constructive attitude, to avoid the temptation of promising simplistic solutions and to carefully analyse the risks and benefits of any proposals; insists that working together closely with local and regional authorities and explaining to citizens the implications of reintroducing borders on their daily lives are of crucial importance, in order to re-establish the credibility of the European Union in this moment of crisis; points out in this context that temporary border controls cannot be prolonged indefinitely according to the clearly defined conditions set out in the Schengen Border Code (SBC), and that their extension for a maximum of 2 years is only possible in exceptional circumstances where the functioning of the area without internal borders is put at risk by persistent serious deficiencies in external borders controls;
13. stresses that it is urgently necessary to develop a common, sustainable and ambitious European approach to managing Europe's external borders, in particular by setting up hot-spots in third countries, in order to preserve the security of the internal Schengen area, ensure free movement and prevent a serious crisis of credibility for the EU; calls, therefore, on all parties involved to develop clear roadmaps and timelines for both short and long-term solutions, whilst stressing the need to establish what shared responsibility and solidarity-based measures entail, taking account of the expectations, needs and integration capabilities of different countries, regions and local authorities, as well as of the migrants;
14. supports in this context the establishment of a common EU list of safe countries of origin, which would allow for the fast-tracking of asylum applications from citizens of countries that are considered 'safe' according to the criteria set out in the Asylum Procedures Directive and in full compliance with the principle of non-refoulement, instead of having uncoordinated national lists, which risk leading to a race to the bottom in terms of the lowest recognition rates;
15. instructs the President to forward this resolution to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council and the President of the European Council.

Brussels, 11 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*  
Markku MARKKULA

---

## OPINIONS

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

116TH. PLENARY SESSION, 10 AND 11 FEBRUARY 2016

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Age-friendly tourism

(2016/C 120/03)

**Rapporteur:** Annemiek JETTEN, Mayor of Sluis (NL/PES)

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

1. underlines the need to identify the different groups within the community of elderly, defining their market preferences and needs in order to develop business plans adjusted to ensuring the best possible development of age-friendly tourism in the EU, aimed at both group and individual tourism offers; stresses also the need to identify the different barriers that older tourists may face (such as language, accessibility of information, organisational challenges, age discrimination, availability of healthcare and emergency, travel insurance, etc.) as well as suggesting ways and means to overcome these barriers;
2. notes that it will be important in future to work on the basis of a single age range or definition when discussing senior tourism, so that monitoring and comparable studies can be carried out with the aim of **maximising** the potential of this growing market segment;
3. emphasises that it is vital to have a large initial market, with **broadband** (roll-out) throughout Europe, in order to give relevant regions every opportunity to develop and **secure** a strategically sustainable competitive (tourism) advantage. Small and medium-sized tourism companies in particular could **benefit** from this;
4. calls on the Commission to make senior tourism central to the **Digital Agenda for Europe**, as a mechanism for bridging the digital divide;
5. believes that a policy to promote **age-friendly tourism requires an integrated approach**. In particular, local and regional authorities should adopt a **cross-sectoral approach** that involves different organisations operating in areas such as healthcare, accessibility and transport;
6. recognises the importance of setting up a **European database** containing facts and figures on this affluent population group consisting generally of independent-minded older people. Within this standardised framework, analyses and indicators can be developed to effectively explain the implications of this growing number of older people for the services provided by tourism operators in terms of: tourist destinations, transportation, attractions, accommodation, retail facilities, and sources of information and media that give tourists ideas and knowledge which are important in helping them enhance their personal experience of tourism. Given the growth in senior tourism, such a database will become increasingly important;



7. refers to the objectives of the EU's 2010 tourism policy<sup>(1)</sup>, namely to promote 'sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism', as well as the associated growth in jobs and social development in the EU;

8. calls on the European Commission to earmark a greater share of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for tourism development after evaluating the needs of local and regional authorities. The Commission could also mobilise financial support by continuing the Calypso programme, paying particular attention to tourism companies in the COSME programme and introducing Erasmus+ funding for older people. Given the employment potential of this sector, the promotion of tourism — also in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) — should be made a pillar of the multiannual framework post-2021;

9. underlines that accessibility is fundamental to ensuring the smooth running of any tourism activity, especially for older people, as their access to tourist destinations and places of interest (hotels, spas, etc.) by means of sustainable, comfortable, affordable transport adapted to the needs of different age segments of tourists is a pre-condition for their travelling at all. It would therefore be advisable to involve the providers of transportation such as airlines, passenger shipping and bus companies, train operators and cruise lines to establish cooperation between them to ensure intermodality between the different modes of transport so that the elderly can easily and comfortably reach their tourism destinations, including remote regions;

10. in this context seconds the proposal of the European Parliament Intergroup on European Tourism Development to declare 2018 a **European Year of Tourism**, noting that there should be a greater focus on facilities for older people and the promotion of tourism during the low and mid seasons;

11. points out that the tourism sector is very important for Europe's regions because of the income and jobs it generates: for certain regions tourism is even indispensable for promoting and sustaining competitive advantage. Tourism has significant growth potential and is directly and indirectly connected with many economic sectors and aspects of society and culture. It is often a driving factor in developing and expanding competitiveness on a comprehensive, strategic and sustainable basis. Local and regional authorities play a crucial role here, and it is therefore of the utmost importance to capitalise on their knowledge and experience by encouraging local and regional cooperation at European level;

12. notes that older people make a significant contribution to Europe's tourism industry and represent enormous market potential. Moreover, in Europe the over-65 age group already has spending power of more than EUR 3 trillion and the number of people with age-related impairments is expected to grow from 68 million in 2005 to 84 million in 2020. There are currently over 128 million EU citizens aged between 55 and 80, accounting for around 25 % of the total population. However, 41 % of Europeans across the 28 Member States have never travelled outside their national borders, while seven out of ten older people only take holidays in their own country;

13. concludes that this demographic trend has considerable implications for the demand for tourism services and by extension for the labour market. The tourism industry has already proven to be far more resilient to external shocks/crises than anticipated. Expenditure on leisure and tourism remains high in today's economy. Tourism is a very labour-intensive activity, making an important contribution to employment and social development, and it deserves to receive more attention in the next multiannual framework;

14. notes that the tourism sector is facing many challenges, including: (a) demographic shifts, (b) digital technologies and (c) diversification of tourist amenities. Global competition is upending conventional marketing strategies in favour of strategies that make service provision more accessible and flexible for tourists;

15. believes that quality, sustainability, continuing innovation and a well-trained workforce are key to the development of age-friendly tourism;

---

<sup>(1)</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52010DC0352>

16. therefore recommends that the national and regional significance of the demographic challenge be determined under the regional Operational Programmes (OPs), which concern among other things the competitiveness of SMEs, employment and the jobs market, and social integration. This is important in addressing seasonal unemployment and generating leverage with jobs in the tourism sector;

17. notes that to extend the local and regional tourist season, within and in addition to specific age-groups, policymakers should be looking also at specific groups motivated by their common interests such as cultural heritage, history, education, religion, sports and recreation;

18. notes that, health tourism represents a growing element of the EU's tourism sector and its two dimensions (medical healthcare and wellness tourism) should be supported. It is essential, especially from a regional perspective, to promote competitiveness and turn European destinations into destinations of health excellence with high added value offers. Health tourism is becoming the market segment with the highest growth within the tourism industry, especially among the elderly for whom seeking healthcare is one of the main motivations for travelling;

19. believes that improving digital technologies to ensure faster access to ICT serves a number of objectives, including the promotion of age-friendly tourism, and can be linked to priorities that are important for the EU. Facilitating access to technological infrastructure will help significantly to develop silver spending power, bearing in mind that the over-50s are now the age group with the greatest spending power (potential of the silver economy);

20. notes the importance of food tourism for the creation of sustainable jobs, regional growth and cohesion as over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food;

21. recommends that local and regional authorities focus on these measures in the OPs by: getting involved, encouraging public-private partnerships (PPS), building networks, and promoting and developing age-friendly tourism. Communication activities to raise awareness of the market potential of age-friendly tourism should therefore also be a key priority for local and regional authorities;

22. notes that there is no uniform market for senior tourism; rather, older people are a heterogeneous group of individuals with different needs, incentives and expectations. Social isolation is a risk for older people, and tourism helps them to create new social contacts. Research shows that older people who engage in tourist activities not only have better health and are therefore less dependent on care services, also actively chose their destinations to benefit from quality health and welfare services;

23. recommends maintaining the link with the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Active and Healthy Ageing in relation to promoting mobility, safety, accessibility in public places, healthcare and social services;

24. would remind the EU institutions and the Member States that local and regional authorities play an important role in coordinating sectoral policies such as transport, care, urban planning and rural development. These sectors in turn have a direct and indirect impact on local tourism, where services are provided by small and medium-sized family businesses;

25. agrees that local authorities need to seize the opportunities offered by tourism for developing 'smart' cities and that the skills of individual SMEs should be harnessed and support given to them. Such support could involve awareness-raising activities, which might include capacity-building to provide information on financing options, coordination of partnerships on EU projects through, for instance, twinning programmes, or the establishment of joint ventures based on local and regional best practice in relation to easier access to information, transport infrastructure and products adapted to all age-group needs;

26. calls on policymakers to create the necessary conditions for the tourism sector to:

— develop affordable and varied tourism services,

- identify good practice among senior citizen organisations and extend this practice by, for example, setting up exchange programmes for older people,
- develop affordable tourism products for older people,
- help small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector to cooperate in packaging and marketing tourism services in their region,
- encourage efforts to make cross-border travel easier for older people,
- to respect the principle of subsidiarity in line with article 195 TFEU which stipulates that the EU has only a supporting competence in matters of tourism;

27. notes that reservation systems, social media and electronic marketplaces are just a few of the common tourism applications available on the internet. Local authorities may also opt to employ modern communication technology, including search engines which provide transparent information so that older people understand what quality to expect for what price. However, not all older people are familiar with online booking systems and product review websites. The digital divide means that they may rely more on traditional reservation methods and personal interaction, inter alia, with travel agents. To enable older generations to take advantage of digital opportunities, local and regional authorities could, for example, provide classes geared towards older people;

28. believes that social contacts can help older people to stay healthy, independent and active at work or in their community. This can be achieved by supporting social networks and involving stakeholders (e.g. research centres and institutes, private IT companies, civil society and local communities) in designing and developing technological interfaces and a universal blueprint for age-friendly communities;

29. is aware that the impact of digital interaction between stakeholders has evolved considerably and underlines the importance of having a European database. In order to make the most of existing resources, a database on senior tourism could be provided by the Virtual Tourism Observatory, although it would presumably still have to be decided who would develop the model and who would gather the data for the indicators;

30. notes that the soaring cost of healthcare has strengthened interest in the issue of ageing and the creation of **cross-sectoral partnerships**. eHealth initiatives could thus have a very favourable impact on the development of age-friendly tourism. Older travellers often cite health as the second reason not to take a trip. If older people were given access (online) to high-quality healthcare away from home, this might allay or dispel their fears, and perhaps make them more adventurous in their free time. Travel to gentler climes and exposure to new experiences could also get them out of their routine and be beneficial to their health;

31. stresses the importance of a cross-border healthcare directive and calls on regional and national authorities to improve access to information about health services abroad for senior citizens, enabling them to make informed choices about cure and care procedures and to travel within the EU without health-related worries;

32. recommends improving mobility, launching safety initiatives and improving accessibility in public places for all age groups. It is important to forge strong links between senior tourism and the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing;

33. supports the idea of launching a European Covenant of Mayors on Demographic Change and calls for tourism to be recognised as an important policy area that can help to boost innovation, healthy and active living, and intergenerational solidarity.

Brussels, 10 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*  
Markku MARKKULA

---

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Innovation and modernisation of the rural economy

(2016/C 120/04)

**Rapporteur:** Randel LÄNTS, Member of Viljandi City Council (EE/PES)

### I. BACKGROUND

1. The Europe 2020 strategy views towns and cities as the main engines of economic growth. However, it will not be possible to attain the goals of this strategy and preserve territorial cohesion without harnessing all the available potential, which includes the potential offered by rural areas.
2. Rural and intermediate regions constitute 91 % of the EU's area, are home to 60 % of the EU's population, produce 43 % of gross value added and host 56 % of the EU's jobs.
3. Rural life boasts a rich cultural, architectural, natural, social, culinary and economic heritage. Thus rural areas are of prime importance in new political approaches that foster sustainable development and territorial cohesion.
4. Many rural areas in the European Union are faced with similar problems: physical accessibility, distance from centres of decision-making and research and educational establishments, and inadequate technological infrastructure. This causes the technology gap to grow even wider. Labour market participation is lower in rural areas and fewer jobs are created there. On the other hand, rural areas also offer a whole range of advantages: countryside, a pleasant living environment and lower levels of pollution, to name but a few.
5. It should, however, be noted that rural areas can be very diverse in terms of their characteristics and challenges. Some areas are suffering from rural exodus and an ageing population, together with low population density and dispersed centres of population, while others that are closer to urban areas are under increasing pressure due to a rising demand for building plots and demographic developments. Decreased agricultural activity means that some areas are struggling with an economic downturn; others are meeting with increasing success due to the attributes of their natural surroundings or other qualities related to their living environment, tourism, and/or an influx of people coming to live in those areas. Some areas have a relatively well developed road network and good information and communications infrastructure, while others are relatively isolated. Some areas are located on the mainland and others in island regions, which have to cope with the handicaps characteristic of islands. What they all have in common is that the level of development in rural areas is lower than that of the EU, particularly compared with development levels in urban areas — and the gap is widening.
6. In any event, European legislation recognises various types of rural areas, such as mountain areas and sparsely populated areas, which require a targeted approach jointly addressing their constraints and potential for development.
7. Maintaining high quality public and private services often requires significant political, civic and financial investment and more solidarity between town and country. At the same time, the development of public services or products can constitute a new challenge for businesses. For example, the conditions for the award of public contracts can create incentives for businesses to seek innovative solutions and so on.
8. In comparison with the previous period, funding available under the CAP has been cut by 11,1 %. Eleven Member States have already decided to compensate for this change by transferring funds from the first to the second pillar, while five of them — including four central and east European countries which receive direct payments below the EU average — have decided to do the opposite. However, these funds continue to be dedicated more to bringing in revenue than to modernising and stimulating rural areas.

9. It is impossible to envision a genuine policy for rural development without taking all the stakeholders into account. In rural development programmes, the European institutions, Member States and regional and local authorities should take due account of social integration, the fight against poverty and the promotion of rural economic growth. The decrease of resources make it very difficult for LRAs to finance these priorities.

10. Only 6 % of the EAFRD budget is put towards the LEADER programme, which in some Member States may not be sufficient to revive investment. Meanwhile, the LEADER programme has helped to create 150 000 jobs since 1991 and it is an important instrument that stimulates employment, thereby helping to preserve and enhance the socioeconomic fabric in rural areas.

11. In addition to funds being increased, the scope of local development should be enlarged to encompass all projects for stimulating economic and social development in rural areas. Cooperation among small producers should be supported with the aim of boosting their production capacity and the performance of local markets, overcoming problems related to short supply chains, and promoting product development and collaborative marketing. Measures like this can also enhance cooperation with regional educational and vocational training institutions, LEADER networks and other forms of local cooperation.

12. A study carried out by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy to support local development under cohesion policy, best practice and future policy options recommends setting up a coordination platform for local development with the task of incorporating the local dimension of development into the Europe 2020 strategy. The platform should focus on simplifying procedures and examine whether the various sector-specific policies are consistent. In practice, the platform should take the form of a Commission inter-service working group, which could be enlarged with representatives of other EU institutions.

13. As various studies have shown, a key contribution to the development of rural communities and to fostering innovation in this area is increasingly being made by rural development networks, in that they are able to provide advice and information to help devise creative solutions for addressing local issues, share lessons learned and successful experiences among their members and identify sources of funding; to this end, we welcome the establishment of the European Network for Rural Development and the European Innovation Partnership under Articles 52 and 53 of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013.

14. During the previous programming period (2007-2013), rural development was supported with EUR 91 billion from the EAFRD and EUR 85 billion from other Structural Funds. However, the new ERDF Regulation is principally concerned with urban areas; it does not even mention rural areas. Thus the question arises as to what real possibilities remain for co-financing development projects in rural areas using the other Structural Funds (the ERDF and ESF in particular), given that most measures in the EAFRD Regulation are reserved for agriculture.

15. It is also necessary to consider the question of cooperation between funds, using specific funding to address the situation of areas with low population density and severe and permanent demographic handicaps.

16. A recent overview of the implementation of the operational programmes shows that for the moment only EUR 22,6 billion of ERDF is labelled as to be spent in rural areas. This is only 11 % of the total ERDF budget.

17. It should be emphasised that European funds for territorial cooperation can help to pool human and technical resources in cross-border zones for the development of rural areas located in border regions.

18. On 23 March 2015, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) presented a guarantee fund model for agriculture intended to ensure better access to loans in rural areas so that farmers and other players in rural areas can get loans more easily.

19. Population decline and the exodus of young people from rural areas to towns and cities is a serious problem throughout Europe. The main reasons for leaving are a lack of jobs, low wages and a general lack of appeal. At the same time, rural businesspeople complain that they are unable to find new, skilled workers. Therefore rural vocational training must be rapidly improved, in terms of both initial vocational training and further vocational training.

20. It is important that training in areas where there is a need for it is provided flexibly, rapidly and on a scale that is appropriate to a given region. It is, of course, more difficult to provide vocational training in rural areas than in urban areas, because learners are widely dispersed in terms of where they live and have different needs. One of the easiest ways to engage educational institutions and businesses is to take on trainees; however, without external support this may be too burdensome for small businesses. Consideration should be given to plans for supporting companies that take on trainees, pay them a decent wage and offer genuine prospects for their long-term employment. Regional vocational training institutions and other educational institutions should be provided with comprehensive resources and should have clear missions relating to further training and retraining. Meanwhile, civil society has helped set up the necessary institutions in some areas, and these experiences should be shared with other areas.

21. Thanks to rapid technological developments, forestry has become more significant to rural areas and the rural economy. Nowadays, forestry means much more than just raw material (wood). Processed wood is used in construction, while wood fibres are used in the clothing and automotive industries, and even in the food industry.

22. Fast telecommunications networks are vitally important for competitiveness and economic growth. Quality digital services can only be offered if fast and reliable internet is available. Although broadband coverage in the EU has greatly improved over the past few years, and the necessary infrastructure is now in place in some areas, many places are still lagging far behind. Moreover, coverage statistics do not always reflect the quality of broadband provisions in rural areas. In line with the targets set out in the Digital Agenda for Europe 2020, efforts must be made to ensure the same capacity across the whole EU. The contrast between rural and urban areas is particularly visible in this regard. In some areas with basic accessibility, end users still have to invest large sums of their own money for a connection. Further efforts must be made to promote the breakthrough of the virtual market, to improve access to affordable digital communication services and to develop online services in rural areas.

23. In addition to the availability of infrastructure, it is important to ensure that the general public and businesses make good use of this potential. Studies show that, even with good internet access, most people make only relatively limited use of the possibilities on offer. Training and the dissemination of information on the various possibilities — in particular, on the use of ICT in small businesses for developing products — could be an opportunity for rural areas.

24. Today, the concept of 'smart cities' is usually associated with big cities, where changes play out and development prospects are sought. However, rural areas, too, would be well advised to be receptive to this concept. 'Town' and 'country' should not be seen as opposites; rather, there should be a synergy between them, which new technologies and their practical implementation can help to foster. The term 'smart regions' should be used in order to avoid the urban-rural dichotomy.

25. The common agricultural policy governs agriculture and the key role it plays in rural development. At regional level, rural development and the development of agriculture are closely linked. Although rural area is not necessarily synonymous with agriculture, there is no doubt that without agriculture there would be no rural areas. Agriculture cannot be developed in isolation from everything else. It is important to continue to ensure convergence between the conditions and aims of agriculture and those of rural development, so that the development of agriculture contributes to raising the standard of living not only of rural communities and farm workers but also of the inhabitants of neighbouring towns.



26. The European Innovation Partnership 'Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability' is an innovative approach to addressing weaknesses, shortcomings and obstacles that hinder or slow down the development and marketing of good ideas arising from European research and innovation. Solutions must be found, in particular with regard to under-investment, outdated regulations, a lack of standards, and problems due to market fragmentation.

27. Given that many rural areas face problems in terms of physical accessibility that can prevent them from developing their full economic potential, public funds also need to take account of connecting rural and urban areas effectively through fast transport networks that also respect the environment they have to pass through.

## II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

28. takes the view that the economic, environmental and social problems emerging in all regions, and particularly in the EU's rural areas, can only be solved by integrated policy approaches

and therefore wishes:

29. to welcome the newly established common strategic framework and to invite the Commission to continue harmonising the rules for the Structural Funds in order to better plan and steer rural development;

30. to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislative provisions concerning integration of the Funds, innovation in the agricultural and rural sector and cooperative approaches, which are the most innovative elements of the rural development policy reform;

31. to strive for more differentiated approaches and take rural interests into account in all EU policy areas, as is currently the case for cities;

32. to draw attention to the fact that austerity measures and the general funding cuts for agriculture and rural development threaten the future viability of rural areas and thus contradict the principle of territorial cohesion in the EU;

33. to ask the Commission to better support rural areas which have had to make major efforts to change their economic model, for example in switching from farming to the tourism sector;

34. to increase overall EU financial support for rural development in order to counterbalance the growing concentration of agricultural production, which is leading to major regional disparities, and put a cap on transfers from the second to the first pillar;

35. to consider, within the Multiannual Financial Framework mid-term review, allocating more EU funds for local development in the 2014-2020 programming period;

36. given that the importance of promoting rural development is now recognised, to call for Leader to be accorded a minimum share higher than 5 % of the total contribution from the EAFRD;

37. to pay special attention to programmes aimed at regenerating or developing municipalities that are sparsely populated or at risk of depopulation and at promoting their historical and cultural heritage for tourism purposes;

38. to support the call made by the European Countryside Movement (ECM) and the enlarged European Parliament Intergroup on Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas to the Commission to draw up a white paper to serve as the starting point for a post-2020 development policy for rural areas;

39. to express its firm support for the local development coordination platform to be set up by the European Commission;
40. to emphasise the importance of rural areas as hubs for development and innovation, which contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy;
41. to ensure that the ERDF reflects a firm belief in the added value of cooperation between urban and rural areas and more practical account being taken of these areas, so as to make full use of the potential of such cooperation and to use this to make a substantial contribution to territorial cohesion;
42. to counter the principle of macroeconomic conditionality for the allocation of EU funding: social and environmental indicators must also be taken into account;
43. to pay particular attention to innovative approaches in rural areas, since these can serve as examples for other regions and areas;
44. to work towards gearing EIB funds, agricultural innovation programmes and scientific research primarily to areas with livestock farming and natural handicaps, as is the case of mountain areas, and small family agricultural holdings while also considering solutions to social challenges in order to maintain sustainable agriculture in all regions and preserve rural communities, thereby reducing regional disparities;
45. to underline the importance of the Innovation Partnership for modernising the rural economy, especially in so far as it aims to achieve closer ties between agricultural and research policies and between researchers and farmers. To this end, full use should be made of the measures provided for by Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 to support the priority 'fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas';
46. to call for the drafting at European level of appropriate guidelines identifying the roles and tasks of the various national rural networks and arrangements for assisting in the implementation of the respective rural development plans;
47. to strive for better coordination of innovation policy at EU level;
48. to strongly deplore the fact that rural areas are not included among the primary target group of the European Commission's Innovation Partnership for Local Development ('Smart Cities and Communities');
49. to regret the results of the interim report on the implementation of the operational programmes which highlights the fact that at present, only 11 % of ERDF funds are set to be allocated to rural areas;
50. to modernise the vocational training opportunities on offer in rural areas and to tailor this to worldwide competition conditions and the needs of local businesses;
51. to work towards some ESF funding being allocated to vocational training in rural areas which must be further developed;
52. to call on the Commission, the Member States and their relevant regional and local authorities to encourage cooperation between businesses and regional educational and vocational training institutions, including by facilitating the development of centres to support innovation in agriculture, on the basis of solutions already tested in other Member States;
53. to reiterate its call for the need to educate society as a whole about the importance of preserving rural areas for the general public<sup>(1)</sup> and, consequently, to ensure the provision of basic public services such as education, health or social services to the people living in rural areas;

---

<sup>(1)</sup> NAT-V/029.



- 
54. to develop measures to stimulate small businesses' product development and tackle market barriers and also encourage local consumption and short distribution chains for agrifood products;
  55. to call, with the help of new-generation access networks promoting the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe 2020, for more intensive efforts to develop high-speed internet in rural areas;
  56. to emphasise that fundamental ICT knowledge must be improved.

Brussels, 10 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Markku MARKKULA

---

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — Indicators for territorial development — GDP and beyond

(2016/C 120/05)

**Rapporteur:** Catuscia MARINI (IT/PES), President of the Umbria Region

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

#### A political debate on GDP and beyond

1. acknowledges the relevance of a strategic approach in policymaking that defines common goals based on shared values and identifies actions to achieve the targets collectively set. In this way the opportunities created by the mid-term reviews of the Europe 2020 strategy and the 2014-2020 financial framework will not be missed and the revisions could lead to a substantially improved governance structure involving all tiers of government;
2. believes that an evidence-based approach to public policy — anticipating and measuring the impact of policy options — is crucial to public acceptance of consistent policy decisions;
3. stresses, with regard to the debate on measuring progress in our societies, the close links between measurement, perception and action; emphasising that measures have to be chosen on the basis of widely shared societal values in a forward-looking manner;
4. points out that measures or targets expressed with indicators can never be substitutes for a proper and clearly expressed political strategy; they remain, therefore, a means to an end, i.e. tools for implementing strategic goals;
5. notes that the debate on Indicators for territorial development — GDP and beyond is, therefore, political in nature, and should start with a shared and democratic definition of the strategic objectives for current and future generations chosen by any given authority in terms of its political action;
6. believes, in this context, that it is necessary to further improve the current methodologies used for policy-steering at EU level in order to obtain more up-to-date, comprehensive information that better matches reality, and to define an appropriate, uniform method for including economic, social and environmental aspects in the analysis of the situation;
7. underlines that all levels of government in the European Union should be included in this debate on the future benchmarks for achieving sustainable development and cohesion in the European Union, going beyond GDP;
8. underlines the importance of carefully assessing the need for, and the feasibility and consequences of, additional benchmarks, indicators and methods already tested or used at territorial level; believes that there is sufficient time to carry out an in-depth analysis here to feed into the debates on the next programming period;
9. underlines the challenge of a growing territorial divide in Europe with regard, inter alia, to public and private investment, innovation, digital services, productivity, employment, poverty, social welfare, population trends and the territorial distribution of population, and asks the European Commission to take this into account when assessing EU policies and designing new policy instruments;
10. emphasises in this respect that the CoR could be part of this debate, promoting the position of local and regional authorities and substantially contributing to defining a method which balances economic, social and environmental information and which would, as a reference for financing decisions, eventually be of utmost importance to regional and local authorities;

11. suggests, with a view to the next programming period beyond 2020, that the European Commission starts as early as possible an in-depth discussion with local and regional authorities about the future goals of these policies and the necessary indicators to measure this progress; following on from its 2009 Communication, and considering the latest evolutions, invites the Commission to put forward a roadmap on GDP and beyond;

#### **Towards a method complementing GDP for targeting EU policy**

12. acknowledges the merits of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a simple, straightforward and linear indicator based on a clear methodology that allows comparison of many relevant macroeconomic measures over time and between countries and regions, therefore representing a useful tool for allocating resources;

13. points out, however, that GDP is not an accurate measure of the ability of a society to tackle issues such as climate change, resource efficiency and regions' competitiveness, quality of life, the ageing population, social inclusion, particular geographical features, income distribution or the geographical distribution of resources or economic growth factors; and adds that these aspects are of key concern to citizens, as observed by regional and local representatives;

14. welcomes, therefore, the numerous initiatives at international, national, regional and local level for establishing indices for measuring progress beyond GDP, that can help to develop EU-wide indicators reflecting the situation in the Member States, also at local and regional levels;

15. points as one approach to the use of the alternative Human Development Index, which can make a methodological contribution adapted to the European Union framework, with indicators on a long and healthy life, education and a decent standard of living, following the example of the UN and the United Nations Development Programme;

16. acknowledges the remarkable progress achieved by Eurostat in the context of measuring progress beyond GDP in the areas of 'quality of life', 'household economy' and 'sustainable environment';

17. notes that not all regions and cities have the necessary competences, resources and administrative capacity to engage in target-setting and proposes that solutions be adopted, including a more qualitative 'path-to-change' approach, where the direction of change — i.e. whether regions and cities make positive contributions to national and European targets — would be more important than reaching certain fixed targets. This would allow local and regional authorities to progress at a pace which corresponds to their own potential and capabilities;

18. points out, however, that the indices chosen to be used by local, regional, national and European authorities for drafting and implementing EU policies and measuring progress towards common goals must be uniform and consistent;

19. reminds that not all kind of methodological approaches, usually grouped by the research community into GDP-replacing, GDP-adjusting and GDP-complementing methods, are equally appropriate for an EU-wide 'GDP and beyond' method to measure status and progress on national, regional and local level;

20. reiterates, with regard to EU regional policy, that territorial cohesion is complementary to economic and social cohesion and cannot therefore be measured solely by an economic indicator, but agrees with the European Commission that any method that aims to replace GDP by excluding economic indicators from its scope of observation is not appropriate for the purpose of measuring progress towards common goals in a uniform manner;

21. suggests that the CoR maintain close cooperation, particularly with the OECD, on initiatives such as 'How is life in your region?', which represent an easy-to-understand instrument and a more holistic approach to measuring progress at local and regional level, but, in the context of a multi-annual strategy for Europe, opposes an approach to measuring progress based on a ranking using one single measure; notes in this respect that various regions have also expressed an interest in the OECD's Better Life Index and, above all, in the indicators it uses; although it does not provide a way to measure regional development, its results give an indication of the quality of life of the population, which can serve as the basis for the future definition of objectives and strategies at local and regional level;

22. believes that further analysis could be carried out on methods that attempt to adjust GDP by extending traditional economic performance measures with monetised environmental and social factors with a view to modelling or simulating the economic, social and environmental effects of different policy measures, bearing in mind here the significance of the 'Social Progress Index' that is already used in 40 countries;

23. believes that it is urgent to develop comparable statistical data at the local and sub-local level as well as translating the existing OECD and Commission urban-rural classification into Eurostat categories that can, drawing from reliable information from the ground, assist both EU policymaking and evaluation;

24. points out the lack of quantitative information on the various regions with particular territorial features in the EU — namely geographical, environmental, economic and social features — which have an influence on development; outermost regions are singular examples thereof. It also suggests that Eurostat adopt the territorial categories identified by the Treaty, such as that of outermost regions, on the basis of which statistics could be produced contributing to the proper adjustment and alignment of EU policies and measures in keeping with territorial considerations;

25. welcomes the relevant work carried out by the European Commission in the field of adjusting GDP, using the particularly successful approach of extending national accounts to include the environmental and social domains, but draws attention to the theoretical difficulties involved and the extensive resources needed for expressing social aspects in monetary terms, especially when it comes to regional and municipal accounts, and also doubts whether the results of such a complicated approach can be easily communicated to the public;

26. supports, therefore, methods that complement GDP when measuring progress towards common strategic goals, because such methods acknowledge the multi-dimensional reality by covering different aspects of well-being in economic, social and environmental domains with the help of a limited number of indices;

27. believes, in this context, that the most suitable methodology for policymaking at any governance level is one that comprehensively measures well-being, including economic issues (inter alia productivity, innovation, exports), labour (inter alia indicators on employment and the quality of employment), environmental issues (inter alia energy intensity and efficiency of the economy, protected natural spaces and biodiversity, share of renewable energy, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), demographic issues (including indicators on the current demographic situation and any movements), social inclusion (inter alia people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, distribution of income) and territorial issues (including accessibility and carrying capacity);

28. suggests, moreover, that the choice of indicators should be oriented mainly towards those that measure the possible effects of the policies implemented, especially by measuring the results and impacts as well as the costs; points out that in the case of outlying regions there is a particular need for data on certain shortcomings and adverse conditions, which should be considered before policies are devised and implemented;

29. proposes, therefore, monitoring EU trends within all EU institutions, following up the valuable work done by the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), and cooperating in this process. This would provide an early warning system for all government levels concerning economic, social or environmental trends of European relevance that might have an effect on strategic goals or require an adjustment of strategic priorities;

### **Review of Europe 2020 and future of cohesion policy**

30. emphasises that the Europe 2020 strategy has established a set of targets with associated key indicators and acknowledged the importance of complementing data on economic growth (GDP) with further economic, social, environmental and demographic indicators to measure sustainable progress; adds that this finding is equally valid at subnational levels;

31. underlines that the process of setting the Europe 2020 targets and selecting the indicators to measure its progress was very much top-down, without taking into account the specific situation at local and regional level. By contrast, territorially differentiated needs and objectives are acknowledged by cohesion policy, because the pursuit of overall EU targets should not limit the development potential of a specific region or municipality on the basis of region-specific knowledge and competences; this is why, in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, the CoR is calling for regionalised targets;

32. appreciates the current cohesion policy system, which provides a huge contribution and added value to the regions and noticeably assists the development of the regions affected. It calls upon the European Commission to devise a strategy for the functioning of cohesion policy for the programming period starting in 2021, preserving the current method of implementation, in which GDP, appropriately flanked by other indicators, plays a vital role in assessment and implementation;

33. highlights in this context the different focus of cohesion policy's European Territorial Cooperation objective. In particular, the development of cross-border collaboration aims to support the integration of border regions in all areas of people's lives — thus going above and beyond the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. Methods and indicators need to be worked out in this area that would map and evaluate this kind of progress better;

34. points out the close alignment of the cohesion policy with the Europe 2020 strategy but criticises the mismatch between the measurement and intervention methods of the Europe 2020 strategy on the one hand and the cohesion policy on the other;

35. reminds the European Commission that the territorial dimension should be better highlighted in a revised Europe 2020 strategy, especially in the context of territorial cohesion, where the development of relevant economic, environmental and social indicators could enhance the quality of local and regional policies; such strategies should make use of methods that are based on a multi-dimensional approach, where GDP or other economic indicators are complemented by measures of social and environmental aspects that have been politically endorsed at all governance levels;

36. points out that, in context of the strong incentives for thematic concentration of financial resources from the Structural Funds on a limited number of policy areas that contribute to the pursuit of Europe 2020 strategy, it is reasonable to assume that the success of cohesion policy will be measured by progress towards meeting the Europe 2020 targets;

37. strongly suggests that the new headline targets of Europe 2020 and its post 2020 successor are built from the bottom up so that future national reform programmes can report on the contribution of regions and local authorities towards the national headline targets. This would also lead national governments to involve local and regional authorities in the preparations of national reform programmes which is currently not the case in most Member States;

38. hopes that cohesion policy can return to its original function of reducing development disparities between regions and be the main policy for EU-wide investment. To this end, the link between cohesion policy and the future EU 2020 strategy should also be reviewed in the period after 2020;

39. underlines, nonetheless, that a number of EU instruments are still based on an excessively narrow economic measure. This also concerns cohesion policy, where funds are distributed between Member States according to per capita GDP and unemployment, whereas the classification of NUTS level 2 regions under one of the three development categories determining the allocation of appropriations is based solely on per capita GDP;

40. points out that, consequently, eligibility decisions are basically blind to social and environmental and territorial aspects across European regions, while the logical step would be to base future instruments on a more comprehensive, uniform method, making increased use of social, environmental and territorial indicators, which would in particular reveal the specific regional features set out in the Treaty, which have to be considered in the regions' eligibility;

41. questions what is the ability of NUTS level 2 to reflect real communities and real geographies when in many Member States NUTS areas are purely statistical geographies based on population rather than reflecting real boundaries or functional geographical areas. While noting that NUTS are also used to date to allocate EU Structural Funds, their use to formulate and evaluate the territorial impact of EU cohesion, transport, environment and other policies has a pervasive effect which results in EU policies being out of step with the situation on the ground. In this respect, for the sake of a fairer allocation of the funds it is crucial that decisive shortcomings of GDP, such as the territorial bias caused by commuting over NUTS borders, need to be counterbalanced by taking into account the social and environmental situation in the regions when decisions on eligibility are made;

42. stresses in this respect that the application of the Structural Funds, including the Cohesion Fund, should open up to include measures to complement GDP in the next multiannual financial period as far as they are politically acceptable at all levels of governance;

### **Next steps for enabling a strategy based on GDP and beyond**

43. acknowledges, at the same time, the legitimacy of headline targets for achieving comprehensive strategic goals and points out that, for monitoring progress, target-relevant, harmonised and comparable regional data have to be available in a timely manner;

44. underlines, in this context, that the availability of indicators and of frequently updated data at a regional level is essential to improving the accountability of the technical proposal and making good political decisions. Therefore, although the data system for well-being indicators is already effective and well-structured at Eurostat level, the major challenge for regional and local policymakers, including with regard to the multi-level implementation of Europe 2020 and cohesion policy, should be urgently addressed by the European Commission and by Eurostat, with the aim of improving the data system and making it more effective while, at the same time, developing and using policy impact assessment methodologies;

45. welcomes, in this respect, the progress made by the Commission concerning its 2009 Roadmap for 'Measuring progress in a changing world' but regrets that little improvement has been achieved in the production and dissemination of regional and local data;

46. points out that often those countries where the availability of regionally and, crucially, local data is less complete are the ones that, under EU Structural Funds, can devote a significant amount of their allocation to the so-called Thematic Objective 11 (institutional capacity building). Considering that we are at the start of the programming period, there is a unique opportunity to build pan European comparable data at regional and local level that can be used to inform the shaping and evaluation EU policies post 2020;

47. urges the European Statistical System to further enhance the quality of administrative data as well as to accelerate the implementation of geo-referencing statistics in order to increase the value of data collections and to lower the respondents' burden;

48. welcomes the fact that, since the last CoR Opinion on 'GDP and beyond', the data available at EU level, particularly with regard to the local and regional level, has steadily grown, but regrets that it still contains significant gaps; therefore suggests that the European Commission provide — as early as possible — an analysis of the current and future gaps in the provision of a comprehensive set of economic, social, environmental and demographic data in Europe, going beyond GDP;

49. particularly regrets, in this regard, that currently the regionalisation of Europe 2020 indicators is not satisfactory, because only some of the indicators needed to track the Europe 2020 headline targets at regional level (NUTS level 2 and 3) are available, and sometimes with a considerable time lag. The same applies to the alternative indicators that regions and cities might deem necessary in their territories as a pre-condition for progress towards the EU goals and targets. Updated regional statistics would make it possible to build a synthetic Regional Progress Indicator, as proposed by the Committee of the Regions;

50. requests the European Commission/Eurostat to set out a timeline to engage the local and regional authorities in the process of (realistic) target-setting and to deliver the regional statistics needed to design, implement, monitor and evaluate the renewed Europe 2020 strategy by setting territorially differentiated targets;
51. highlights the need to go beyond the current system of statistics and indicators (based on the NUTS regulation) when measuring progress at local and regional level, particularly with regard to the concept of 'functional regions' and cross-border areas, and suggests that the European Commission further develop the concepts and indicators which go along with this, as well as take account of areas that form part of macro-regional strategies;
52. reiterates that urban and rural dimensions should be better highlighted across a broad range of EU policies, especially in the context of territorial cohesion, where the development of relevant economic, environmental and social indicators could enhance the quality of local and regional policies;
53. urges the European Commission to include in the European statistical programme the measures needed for dealing with shortcomings in statistical information on territorial diversity and specific features in the EU, namely measures for compiling data and building up indicators on regions' remoteness and isolation, so as to improve the process of devising and implementing European policies better adapted to regions affected by these phenomena, in keeping with the principle of territorial cohesion;
54. considers it necessary to establish a decision-making support model that sets out a ranking system for local well-being priorities in order to set out specific local needs in a common framework for all EU regions, and to use this ranking system to carry out *ex ante* and *ex post* assessments of policy effectiveness, not least during negotiations between the European Commission and local authorities or consultations with local stakeholders;

Brussels, 11 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*  
Markku MARKKULA

---



**Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — European cooperation in the youth field  
(2010-2018)**

(2016/C 120/06)

**Rapporteur:** Csaba BORBOLY (RO/EPP), President of Harghita County Council

**Reference document:** Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Draft 2015 Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)

COM(2015) 429 final

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

1. welcomes the fact that the Commission has recognised the importance of improving the development of policies based on facts and solid evidence within the field of youth affairs, and of coordinating the European Union, the regions' and Member States' resources and efforts as effectively as possible in order to achieve youth policy objectives;
2. is particularly appreciative of the Commission's approach, which deems it necessary to react as rapidly as possible — in the area of youth affairs during the period 2016-2018 — through appropriate changes to policy in response to new challenges such as the integration of young refugees or the rise in extremism among young people;
3. in this context, specifically welcomes the benefits of the EU's framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) in terms of improving cooperation between EU Member States and their local and regional authorities and of opening up and expanding the opportunities and advantages of European integration for young people; therefore urges the Commission to extend the framework beyond 2018 and develop it further;
4. insists that in the future, ensuring equal opportunities, promoting social integration and improving the competitiveness of young people on the labour market, while fostering active citizenship (youth participation), the strengthening of youth work, non-discrimination and intercultural understanding, should remain the key objectives of youth policy;
5. expresses its concern however that the Commission fails to mention the role of local and regional authorities (LRAs) in relation to youth policy, despite it being very obvious that in the majority of Member States — where there are national policies on youth matters — LRAs are, to varying degrees, the competent authorities in this area;
6. appreciates the work of Eurostat to produce and coordinate sets of data relating to a range of factors relating to youth issues;
7. calls on the Commission to systematically assess the territorial impact of youth policy at sub-national level, at least to NUTS 2 level. In order to further strengthen the regions' role in implementing the EU's youth strategy, within the framework of the Open Method of Coordination among EU Member States, considers necessary the development of measurable indicators, of concrete youth-related action plans involving all levels of government and of strong partnerships between youth organisations and public authorities;



8. after consulting stakeholders, considers that while the Erasmus+ programme and the Youth Guarantee are essential tools for achieving strategic objectives, the problems are far more complex and EU action in the area of youth affairs already goes beyond these two effective tools which, though seemingly effective, are actually insufficient, given that the Youth Guarantee is still not being properly applied. With regard to vulnerable young people in particular, there is a clear need for initiatives to support young people coming out of care systems and who, at the age of 18, may find themselves without any kind of oversight to guide them in their transition to adulthood. Consequently highlights the need to make other information on the results of youth policy accessible in an appropriate format, particularly in relation to subjects such as youth unemployment, and social inclusion, amongst other things. This would also help determine whether it would not be appropriate to provide for specific assistance from the European Structural and Investment Funds, as from the current programming period. Given the complexity and magnitude of the challenges at hand, youth policy should be mainstreamed into all EU policies taking a horizontal approach, as these policies can not only seek solutions for the pressing problems faced by young people, but also serve as a launch-pad for generating new economic growth. In addition, the rediscovery of the values of long-standing traditions and occupations may provide new job opportunities. Substantial efforts are still needed to promote the exchange of best practice in youth involvement and youth work between Member States and local and regional authorities. Moreover, the economic case for education and training, which was debated at the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of 12 December 2014<sup>(1)</sup> within the context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy, should now be translated into concrete investments in education as part of the EU's long-term youth and growth agendas;

9. is pleased to note that the Commission is improving the provision of information for young job-seekers through the EURES system for exchanging information on job offers and that it has launched the 'Your first EURES job' initiative to support young people seeking employment abroad; welcomes the specific measures it has taken to implement the Council's call, in its Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships, to extend the EURES portal to traineeships; and calls on the Member States to make more use of the options offered by these instruments;

10. notes with concern that direct political activity (particularly voting in elections) is declining among young people, whose participation is lower than that of older generations, but celebrates the interest many young people show in getting involved as active members of their local community by joining organisations, through online tools (social media) or by volunteering. Thus the Committee is pleased to note that the Commission and the Member States want to use new forms of participation in democratic processes and access to political decision-making as part of the EU's youth strategy; young people should also be given more information on their right to launch and support European Citizens' Initiatives;

11. recommends that, with full consideration of the fact that the Member States are responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems, the Commission assess good practices in Member States and regions with regard to the teaching of political literacy and to the lowering of the voting age and more precisely, the direct or indirect influence that these two elements have on political engagement among young people and their willingness to get involved. The Commission should then share the results of this assessment with Member States and the regions;

12. considers the role of youth and sports organisations that operate in formal settings and provide non-formal and informal educational programmes for active citizenship outside school to be especially important, as they contribute considerably to developing young peoples' participatory skills and to improving the quality of the decision-making process. Therefore considers support for these organisations to be important;

13. also stresses the need to identify and develop a clearer picture of non-structured communities of young people, whose numbers are steadily increasing, inter alia, thanks to responsible use of social media. These communities often include young people who have difficulty accessing opportunities and lack the means to enter into dialogue with the institutions;

14. acknowledges the importance of good quality socio-educational provision and the need to develop the capacity to respond to social, behavioural and technological change. It is also important in this connection to continue supporting the recognition and publicising of non-formal and informal learning in youth work;

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Press Release of 3358th Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting  
<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/workarea/downloadAsset.aspx?id=40802190967>

15. is concerned at the fact that socio-educational provision, which is also generally the responsibility of local authorities in several Member States, has been subject to budgetary cuts throughout Europe, while the growing percentage of young people at risk of poverty and exclusion, not to mention the ever-increasing prevalence of unhealthy behaviours and associated rise in the mortality rate among young people, and calls for an increase in these services. There is also a particular need to promote positive lifestyles entailing less drug use, alcohol abuse, smoking and obesity, not least by encouraging physical activity. At the same time it is important to propose active policies to provide young people, either in associations or individually, with opportunities for personal and vocational development so they are in a position to 'create new forms of social relations' (2001 White Paper on European youth);

16. in response to the current migration crisis and within the context of the European Agenda for Migration, calls for directly accessible financial resources for local and regional authorities to allow them to fulfil their obligations where migration and integration are concerned;

17. considers that migration of young people from less well-off European regions or regions worst hit by the economic crisis, undermines territorial and social cohesion and leads to serious demographic challenges. In order to promote growth and job creation in those regions, which is key to averting young people's exodus and the subsequent brain drain, the Committee stresses the need to support, inter alia, interregional partnerships and direct local and regional actions by means of specific measures financed by the ESI Funds;

18. considers the sharing of best practices to be an important tool in cross-sectoral cooperation to support young people, as it enables Member States, local and regional authorities and youth representatives to learn from each other. Moreover, initiatives such as the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform and the European Youth Forum encourage dialogue on issues such as promoting lifelong learning and European mobility, policies on education and employment, and equal opportunities for men and women;

19. suggests developing a basic package that each Member State should, where possible, guarantee for young people. This package could focus on access to high speed internet, the option of learning a second foreign language to the equivalent of at least B2 level within the public education system, career guidance and continuous mentoring, the chance of appropriate involvement in volunteering, promoting the preparation for a first job, and flexible and accessible forms of funding in order to carry out studies that offer career prospects. At the same time, calls on the European Commission for action to ensure that all young people in the EU who are interested in vocational training have access to it, and also to have a 'minimum qualifications and skills guarantee', recognised and validated in all Member States, that empower them to access and complete a minimum level of educational attainment, accompanied by the relevant level of appropriate skills backed by proper validation that recognises the added value of activities carried out by young people also in non-formal settings;

20. notes the need to carry out studies in the various European regions in order to have a clearer overview of the situation of young people in terms of housing and the habitability of housing. Indeed, it is particularly necessary in this field to exchange best practice and draw up action plans at local level, given that in many regions there is an oversupply of dwellings, whereas in numerous other regions, the quality of the housing stock does not provide appropriate conditions for young people, and in yet other regions, the extremely high prices exclude young people. It would therefore make sense to draw up, on the basis of the relevant data, appropriate action plans to increase the accessibility of good housing conditions to young people. More specifically, it is proposed that a proportion of public housing be set aside for young people, that mutually-supportive neighbourhoods and co-housing for autonomous elderly people and young people be fostered, and home-buying be supported with low interest rate loans for young people;

21. stresses the need to determine how to face challenges in the area of youth policy, such as the issue of matching skills with employers', production and territorial needs, also in the context of reducing the high level of youth unemployment, equal opportunities for young people who live in small communities, located in peripheral, outermost, island and rural areas that are facing demographic challenges, or furthermore, how to promote professional training initiatives tailored to regional specificities and specific skills and the exchange of good practices in this policy area, not least by attaching greater value to manual occupations; underlines that matching skills with employers' needs is an important factor in youth unemployment and further development of young people's career prospects. Considers that procedures should be put in place to ensure the validation and certification of skills acquired by young people in non-formal types of education and volunteering so they can put them to use in finding jobs. Calls for further attention to be paid to these issues, and for an appeal to be made for corporate social responsibility on the part of businesses so that they empathise with young people, who not only are the workforce of today and tomorrow but also the potential customers for their services and the products and services they supply;

22. considers it necessary that national as well as local and regional youth policy continue to focus particularly on issues such as promoting Europe's founding values of Christian culture, discrimination against young people on the basis of sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation, as well as developing measures that should be taken in this respect, including with regard to issues that are specific to young people from national and ethnic minorities;

23. urges the regional and local authorities concerned to make every effort, in compliance with national legislation and European principles, to maintain educational institutions that teach in the mother tongue of national or language minorities and to set up new ones, and calls on the Member States to provide young people from language and national minorities, given their particular academic situation, with effective training in the official national language, in accordance with the principles of multilingualism and non-discrimination;

24. considers it a priority to launch an urgent action plan to deal with the rising incidence of gender-based violence among young people, stipulating the importance of effective mixed schooling in all EU countries;

25. notes that young people have only limited access to the sources of funding needed to set up a business, pay for accommodation or continue their studies; for this reason considers it important for local and regional authorities to find local solutions that will, on the one hand, help to make the region in question more competitive and, on the other, clearly strengthen equal opportunities among young people;

26. therefore emphasises the need to foster spaces for bringing young people together, run by local actors in partnership with, among others, private stakeholders, who can take the needs of their target group of young people and turn them into opportunities for future employability, for sounding out entrepreneurial skills and promoting active participation;

27. calls on the Commission and Member States to check that young people are properly informed on employment law, employment protection legislation and legislation on volunteering, and that they receive the necessary protection, when they are carrying out paid work or volunteer activities or when they undertake a traineeship or internship in their country of residence or in a Member State other than where they are habitually resident; to this end, proposes that they draw on established networks, such as Europe Direct, Eurodesk or Eures, and on local bodies as the main champions of youth policies in regions;

28. highlights that caution should be exercised with regard to the protection of young volunteers or young people active on the labour market, and calls on regions to examine the opportunities in this area for cooperation on mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. It also highlights the need to boost the social and civil value of volunteering, as in the case of civilian service for young people;

29. believes that it would be advisable to examine how, on the one hand, new, emerging social and community values — such as environmental awareness in connection with sustainable and energy-efficient production, community engagement, support to those in need and enhancing the status of artisan activities — can encourage young people's participation in society and successfully integrate them into society and, on the other, promote and uphold the fundamental role of the family as the primary support for individuals' social and economic growth. It recommends a link and a mention of the family among the new sustainable development goals (UN). Support measures cover families of origin, new families and families in the process of formation. The measures concern protection of the family and support for starting a family and parenting, particularly in regions that are demographically challenged;

30. predominantly rural regions must pay special attention to their young populations — a real strategic asset in these areas — and help ensure they remain committed to the rural environment, they must strengthen their ability to continue to reside in these communities, which are sometimes very small in number, and ensure as far as possible the continuity of agricultural work in these areas using traditional farming techniques (underpinned by adequate training) that are environmentally friendly and respect the principles of the sustainable economy. These practices must be financially viable and economically profitable;

31. believes that the isolated measures adopted by different Member States in the area of youth policy are not always sufficient and that coordination of such measures is often patchy. The Committee thus supports the proposal that greater commitment and further measures are necessary at European level to improve coordination, develop harmonisation and exploit the possibility for synergies — particularly given the fact that young people are more open to mobility and migration — and insists that the revised policy should clearly state the key role of LRAs;

32. deems it necessary to bolster the role of young people in the democratic process, to make their voices heard. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to promote dialogue among young people, building on the involvement of civil society and, in particular, of youth organisations, local authorities — both individually and in associations — informal groups, Europe Direct Information Centres which can contribute to the feedback among young people and institutions, and NGOs, which have always represented the section of the population most open to change and social innovation and capable of driving the renewal of society as a whole. Precisely for this reason, the Committee stresses the importance of extending structured dialogue and lends its support to the new measures put forward by the Commission in this area, in relation to enhancing opportunities to participate both for young people in general and for the organisations that represent them. Finally, points out that in order to achieve these objectives, it might be useful to provide for structured intervention, as was done for the Youth Guarantee with the YEI;

33. emphasises the importance of extending structured dialogue and lends its support to the new measures put forward by the Commission in this area, in relation to enhancing opportunities to participate both for young people in general and for the organisations that represent them; points out that young people in particular expect structured dialogue to meet quality criteria that should be reflected as far as possible in the dialogue process. These include a partnership-based approach to dialogue with each side on an equal footing, and adequate time. Young people should be involved in opinion-forming processes at the various political levels in as many policy areas as possible; the regional perspective of youth participation could be strengthened in relation to the youth employment initiative in particular, in the form of structured dialogue;

34. believes it important to promote the inclusion of young people with disabilities and to develop genuine equal access for those young people to the opportunities provided by the Member States and the regions;

35. highlights the need to give priority, in both EU and Member State policies, to the inclusion of at-risk young people, such as NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training) and to young people from migrant backgrounds, who are more likely to move into this category;

36. believes that, given the extremely serious terrorist threat that Europe is currently facing, along with the political and religious radicalisation that unfortunately is gaining ground among young people, it is a priority — in accordance with the EU Security Agenda — to boost participation and confidence in the institutions, so as to prevent violence, radicalisation and extremism and to guarantee young people the right to live in pluralist communities underpinned by democratic European values, the rule of law and fundamental rights;

37. recommends that European LRAs establish local and regional strategies that clearly address problems and opportunities that are specific to young people, taking into account EU and Member States' youth policies. It should be ensured, when drawing up such plans, to enhance mutual learning opportunities while seeking to ensure that the target group — young people — are involved as widely as possible in designing, implementing and evaluating them and that reciprocal learning is encouraged. At the same time, the Committee underlines that all youth strategies and policies shall incorporate horizontal measures fighting the phenomena of discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability and sexual orientation;

38. calls on the European Commission to promote and uphold policies to foster youth entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative fields, in order to create jobs and provide an effective response to all those young people who wish to turn their passions into occupations in the cultural sector.

Brussels, 11 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Markku MARKKULA

---

(Preparatory acts)

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

116TH. PLENARY SESSION, 10 AND 11 FEBRUARY 2016

**Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — The integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market**

(2016/C 120/07)

**Rapporteur:** Enrico ROSSI (IT/PES), President of the Tuscany Region**Reference document:** Proposal for a Council Recommendation on the integration of the long-term unemployed into the labour market

COM(2015) 462

**I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS****Amendment 1**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 4

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Among the most vulnerable to long-term unemployment are people with low skills or qualifications, third-country nationals, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged minorities such as the Roma. The previous occupation also plays an important role, as in some countries the sectoral and cyclical aspects are key in explaining the persistence of long-term unemployment.	Among the most vulnerable to long-term unemployment are people with low skills or qualifications, <b>women (especially poorly qualified women) and single parents, people close to retirement</b> , third-country nationals, persons with disabilities <b>or who are chronically sick</b> and disadvantaged minorities such as the Roma. <b>Young people also have a particular relevance with regard to long-term unemployment, owing to the implications of risks such as social marginalisation, early school leaving, and the loss to society of productive capacity as a result of their non-participation in the labour market.</b> The previous occupation also plays an important role, as in some countries the sectoral, <b>regional</b> and cyclical aspects are key in explaining the persistence of long-term unemployment.

**Amendment 2**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 7

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>Investment in human capital needs to be improved and made more efficient with the aim of equipping more people with good and relevant competences, addressing skill shortages, laying the foundation for a smooth transition from learning to work and for continued employability. Improving the performance and relevance of education and training systems will help curb the influx of new unemployed. To this end, the modernisation of education and training systems needs to be pursued in line with the European semester, with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) <sup>(15)</sup>, the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning <sup>(16)</sup> and the Commission recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market <sup>(17)</sup>.</p> <p><sup>(15)</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).</p> <p><sup>(16)</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.</p> <p><sup>(17)</sup> C(2008) 5737.</p>	<p>Investment in human capital needs to be improved and made more efficient with the aim of equipping more people with good and relevant competences, addressing skill shortages, laying the foundation for a smooth transition from learning to work and for continued employability. Improving the performance and relevance of education and training systems, <b>in conjunction with employment services</b>, will help curb the influx of new unemployed. <b>Similarly, tackling early school leaving, one of the Europe 2020 targets, will help to prevent long-term unemployment, of which it is a root cause.</b> To this end, the modernisation of education and training systems needs to be pursued in line with the European semester, with the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) <sup>(15)</sup>, the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning <sup>(16)</sup> and the Commission recommendation on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market <sup>(17)</sup>.</p> <p><sup>(15)</sup> Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).</p> <p><sup>(16)</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.</p> <p><sup>(17)</sup> C(2008) 5737.</p>

**Amendment 3**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 8

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>With a view to developing a coordinated strategy for employment, the Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States <sup>(18)</sup> call for long-term and structural unemployment to be significantly reduced by means of comprehensive and mutually reinforcing strategies that include individualised active support for a return to the labour market.</p> <p><sup>(18)</sup> COM(2015) 098.</p>	<p>With a view to developing a coordinated strategy for employment, the Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States <sup>(18)</sup> call for long-term and structural unemployment to be significantly reduced by means of comprehensive and mutually reinforcing strategies that include individualised active <b>and inclusive</b> support for a return to the labour market.</p> <p><sup>(18)</sup> COM(2015) 098.</p>



**Reason**

It is necessary to promote social inclusion.

**Amendment 4**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 9

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
The guidelines call on Member States to promote employability by investing in human capital, through appropriate education and training systems, that they are effective and efficient to raise the skill level of the workforce. The guidelines further specifically call on Member States to encourage work-based learning systems such as dual learning and upgrade professional training. The guidelines more generally request Member States to take into account flexicurity <b>principles</b> and strengthen active labour market measures by increasing their effectiveness, targeting, outreach, coverage and interplay with income support and social service provision.	The guidelines call on Member States to promote employability by investing in human capital, through appropriate education and training systems, that they are effective and efficient to raise the skill level of the workforce. The guidelines further specifically call on Member States to encourage work-based learning systems such as dual learning and upgrade professional training. The guidelines more generally request Member States to take into account <b>the principles of</b> flexicurity and <b>inclusiveness, and</b> strengthen active labour market measures by increasing their effectiveness, targeting, outreach, coverage and interplay with income support and social service provision.

**Amendment 5**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 10

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
The actions proposed under this recommendation should be fully compatible with the country-specific recommendations issued in the context of the European semester and their implementation should take place in full compliance with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact.	The actions proposed under this recommendation should be fully compatible with the country-specific recommendations issued in the context of the European semester and their implementation should take place in full compliance with the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact. <b>However, in the context of the Pact, in order to prevent imbalances between individual countries from getting out of hand and so as to be able to move effectively towards stabilisation of the euro area, extraordinary measures could be identified, based on a consensus and within a set timeframe, in order to help countries whose employment services are further from the standards set by best practice to make the necessary changes.</b>

**Reason**

Given the current disparities in employment services between Member States, action is needed to improve the standard of intervention in all countries. The recommendation to adapt services must therefore be accompanied by a process of identifying the mechanisms needed to back them up, as employment services are in general weaker in the countries that have the highest rates of long-term unemployment.

**Amendment 6**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 15

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Intensified labour market integration efforts for those most hard hit by long-term unemployment should be developed. This needs to go hand in hand with improved registration with employment services and other competent agencies in order to tackle the lack of coverage of support measures.	Intensified labour market integration efforts for those most hard hit by long-term unemployment should be developed. This needs to go hand in hand with improved registration with employment services and other competent agencies in order to tackle the lack of coverage of support measures. <b>A specific communications and advice strategy is needed to encourage as many unemployed people as possible to register for employment services. This strategy could be made more effective through the involvement of civil society organisations. However, registration for employment services is not a sufficient measure in itself if the services do not then offer an efficient personalised pathway towards integration into the labour market. The unemployed will not be persuaded to register for the services if they are not seen to be effective. With this in mind, it is necessary to make employment services more proactive towards firms.</b>

**Reason**

Registration for employment services undoubtedly requires an effective communications strategy, but it depends greatly on the recognised ability of employment services to reintegrate workers. The real ability therefore of States to strengthen existing bodies is also a fundamental condition when it comes to encouraging unemployed people to register.

**Amendment 7**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 17

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Individualised approaches to support the long-term unemployed need to address the barriers leading to persistent unemployment, updating and complementing the initial assessment made upon registration. This will guide jobseekers towards support services such as debt counselling, rehabilitation, social work, care services, migrant integration, housing and transport support which address barriers to work and empower jobseekers to reach clear goals leading to employment.	Individualised approaches to support the long-term unemployed need to address the barriers leading to persistent unemployment, updating and complementing the initial assessment made upon registration. This will guide jobseekers towards support services such as debt counselling, rehabilitation, social work, care services, migrant integration, housing and transport support which address barriers to work and empower jobseekers to reach clear goals leading to employment. <b>Consideration should be given to whether it should be compulsory for long-term unemployed people who are receiving benefits to register for employment services.</b>



**Amendment 8**

Proposal for a recommendation

Recital 20

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
For the purposes of this recommendation, a job integration agreement is understood to be a written agreement between the jobseeker and single point of contact with the objective of facilitating the transition into employment on the labour market. Drafted to reflect the individual jobseeker's situation, these agreements detail a package of individualised measures available at national level (labour market, education, training, social services) designed to support and empower jobseekers in overcoming their specific obstacles to employment. They define goals, timelines, mutual responsibilities and review clauses, and indicate both the active and income support measures and social support services available. Job integration agreements link the receipt of benefits to participation in active labour market measures and job search activities, in line with existing national legislation.	For the purposes of this recommendation, a job integration agreement is understood to be a written agreement between the jobseeker and single point of contact with the objective of facilitating the transition into employment on the labour market. Drafted to reflect the individual jobseeker's situation, these agreements detail a package of individualised measures available at national level (labour market, education, training, social services) designed to support and empower jobseekers in overcoming their specific obstacles to employment. They define goals, timelines, mutual responsibilities and review clauses, and indicate both the active and income support measures and social support services available. Job integration agreements link the receipt of benefits to participation in active labour market measures and job search activities, in line with existing national legislation <b>and with the aim of ensuring effective social inclusion.</b>

**Amendment 9**

Proposal for a recommendation

First paragraph

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Support registration of jobseekers and a closer labour market orientation of integration measures. Provide the registered long-term unemployed with an individual assessment. Make a specific job integration agreement offer at the latest when they have reached 18 months of unemployment. To that effect:	Support registration of jobseekers and a closer labour market orientation of integration measures. Provide the registered long-term unemployed with an individual assessment. Make a specific job integration agreement offer at the latest when they have reached 18 months of unemployment; <b>provide subsidised employment as a work reintegration measure, so as to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Where integration is not successful, universal income support needs to be provided.</b> To that effect:  <b>To boost existing employment services.</b>

**Amendment 10**

Proposal for a recommendation

First paragraph — insert a new point after the first paragraph

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<i>Establish employment services with the resources and qualified staff they need to be able to meet the objectives set out in the recommendation. Standards for defining such services could be taken in part from the results of the work done by the European Public Employment Services Network. It is therefore necessary to outline the resources required to adapt existing structures and work out how and where to acquire them. In this regard, the existing co-financing options should be mentioned, such as the ERDF Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 and the ESF Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013, not ruling out the possibility of examining solutions at European level involving the allocation of European funds exclusively for this purpose, considering that reducing long-term unemployment is a fundamental strategic objective for the whole European Union. Economic support could also be linked to the carrying out of further organisational reforms of employment services systems in those countries where the Commission and the Council deem it necessary, as part of the European semester.</i>

**Reason**

Given the current disparities in employment services between Member States, action is needed to improve the standard of intervention in all countries. The recommendation to adapt services must therefore be accompanied by a process of identifying the mechanisms needed to back them up, as employment services are in general weaker in the countries that have the highest rates of long-term unemployment. The ERDF and ESF Regulations set out co-financing options for investment in (modernising) labour market institutions.

**Amendment 11**

Proposal for a recommendation

Third Paragraph

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Individual assessment and approach  Employment services, together with other partners supporting labour market integration, provide personalised guidance to <b>those concerned</b> .	Individual assessment and approach  Employment services, together with other partners supporting labour market integration <b>and with the involvement of private employment service providers and authorised employment agencies</b> , provide personalised guidance to <b>stakeholders</b> .
(2) Ensure that all long-term unemployed are offered in-depth individual assessments and guidance at the latest when they reach 18 months of unemployment. The assessment should cover their employability prospects, barriers to employment and previous job search efforts.	(2) Ensure that all long-term unemployed are offered in-depth individual assessments and guidance at the latest when they reach 18 months of unemployment. The assessment should cover their employability prospects, barriers to employment and previous job search efforts.

**Reason**

Private employment agencies and authorised work agencies also have a role to play.

**Amendment 12**

Proposal for a recommendation

Sixth Paragraph

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
The registered long-term unemployed not covered by the Youth Guarantee are offered a job integration agreement at the latest <b>when they have reached</b> 18 months of unemployment. This should comprise, as a minimum, an individual service offer aimed at finding a job and the identification of a single point of contact.	The registered long-term unemployed not covered by the Youth Guarantee are offered a job integration agreement at the latest <b>within</b> 18 months <b>of becoming</b> unemployed. This should comprise, as a minimum, an individual service offer aimed at finding a job and the identification of a single point of contact. <b>The job integration agreement should be drawn up by means of proactive interaction with the unemployed person in question, putting them centre stage and making them jointly responsible.</b>

**Reason**

It would be useful to provide for earlier action for the unemployed, before 12 months (after which they are considered to be long-term unemployed). Moreover, the unemployed should be more involved in defining their profile and potential so as to further compel them to accept potential offers of training or work.

**Amendment 13**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 7

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Establish partnerships between <b>employers</b> , social partners, employment services, government authorities and social services to ensure that the offers are targeted to the real needs of enterprises and employees.	Establish partnerships between social partners, employment services, government authorities and social services to ensure that the offers are targeted to the real needs of enterprises and employees.

**Amendment 14**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 8

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Develop services for employers such as the screening of job vacancies, placement support, workplace mentoring and training and post-placement support to facilitate the professional reintegration of the long-term unemployed.	Develop services for employers such as the screening of job vacancies, placement support, workplace mentoring and training and post-placement support to facilitate the professional reintegration of the long-term unemployed, <b>making use, whenever necessary, of existing active employment policies aimed at this target group.</b>

**Reason**

To highlight the importance of active employment policies.

**Amendment 15**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 9 — Add new paragraph:

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<i>Further integrate the use of the Structural Funds, for example by linking training activities financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) with action to support growth and innovation financed by other Structural Funds. In particular, incentives can be offered to companies that hire the long-term unemployed. ESF funding could be used for training such persons. Member States and the regions are asked to examine the possibility of funding authorities that encourage projects that combine the various Structural Funds, including, where relevant, through the resources provided under the Performance Reserve.</i>

**Reason**

Since integrating the long-term unemployed is in itself more difficult, it is necessary to make the best use of the Structural Funds to support demand by rewarding firms that, when recruiting, look to the long-term unemployed — whose training could be supported with resources from the ESF.

**Amendment 16**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 10 — Add new paragraph 'HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION:'

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<i>Carry out an ex-ante analysis of active employment policies specifically aimed at the long-term unemployed, with a view to introducing specific measures in the Member States. Moreover, enhance the analysis of active <u>policies combined with community service work and income support initiatives, in order to link employment initiatives with the acquisition of skills that can be used in the labour market. Active policy approaches linked with community service work must be managed by public employment services.</u></i>

**Reason**

To recommend an *ex-ante* analysis of active employment policies. To boost active policy measures by linking them with both job integration contracts/agreements and with potential community service initiatives, with a view to ensuring that professional skills that can be used on the labour market are acquired by the end of community service initiatives.

**Amendment 17**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 10 — Add new paragraph 'HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION:'

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<i>Formulate recommendations on qualitative and quantitative standards that employment services in each country must meet on the basis of the proposals made by the European Public Employment Services Network (established by Decision No 573/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014), and provide for the allocation of EU funding for boosting employment services.</i>

**Reason**

Member States should structure their own employment services to tackle structural unemployment, making the best possible use of ESF resources. Additional unemployment determined by the cycle could be tackled with shared resources that all countries can draw on, irrespective of their level of structural unemployment. This would help to stabilise the cycle, which would benefit all countries in the medium and long term.

**Amendment 18**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 10 — Add new paragraph 'HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION:'

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<p><i>Distinguish between structural unemployment (for which each country must use its own resources or those granted under the ESF thematic objective 'strengthening administrative capacity') and unemployment deriving from more intense and prolonged periods of recession that, by leading to significant increases in unemployment levels, would subject employment services to additional strain.</i></p> <p><i>Encourage Member States to quantify, on the basis of predefined standards, the additional temporary support needed by existing bodies to deal with cyclical shocks.</i></p> <p><i>Assess the possibility of supporting additional costs during the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework. Identified solutions should be subject to the adoption and implementation of reforms designed to boost the efficiency of public and private employment services in Member States, in the cases and direction set out by the country-specific recommendations issued as part of the European semester.</i></p>

**Amendment 19**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 10 — Add new paragraph 'HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE COMMISSION:'

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<i>Encourage integration between support activities relating to long-term unemployment and more general support activities relating to poverty, so that when the objective to reintegrate into the labour market is not met and unemployment benefits are reduced, the unemployed person in question is nevertheless given a minimum income (subject to means testing clearly), on the condition that they accept temporary community service work with a training dimension that is designed to help them get back to work and that guarantees social inclusion.</i>

**Reason**

In cases where the long-term unemployed do not return to work, a solution must be found in order to avoid the risk of them becoming marginalised or falling into poverty — and thus being a cost to society and posing a risk to socioeconomic cohesion — when unemployment benefits end.

**Amendment 20**

Proposal for a recommendation

Point 15

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States and after consulting the stakeholders concerned, the action taken in response to this recommendation, and report to the Council by ... (3 years following the adoption of the recommendation) on the lessons learned.	<p>Evaluate, in cooperation with the Member States and after consulting the stakeholders concerned, the action taken in response to this recommendation, <b>in particular:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <b>to support Member States in their efforts to modernise social protection systems, with a view to establishing a European long-term unemployment insurance scheme, on the basis of common economic and financial indicators.</b></li> <li>— <b>moreover, to evaluate the priorities that are granted EU resources as part of the review of the multiannual financial framework 2014-2020, in order both to continue action under the Youth Guarantee and to take more suitable action against long-term unemployment through extraordinary initiatives such as the creation of an ad hoc fund (an adult guarantee based on the model of the Youth Guarantee) to tackle long-term unemployment;</b></li> </ul> <p>and report to the Council by ... (3 years following the adoption of the recommendation) on the lessons learned.</p>

**Reason**

Long-term unemployment, which is only one aspect of the wider problem of poverty, has particularly serious economic and social consequences. It is therefore necessary that the action called for by the recommendation also covers support for those in poverty, and it is therefore necessary to call on those countries that perhaps have not yet done so to adopt them.

**II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

**Preliminary remarks**

1. While acknowledging the need for the proposal for a recommendation to respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, welcomes the fact that the text addresses the economic and social consequences of long-term unemployment. According to the report by the five presidents (completing Europe's economic and monetary union) this 'is one of the main reasons for inequality and social exclusion. (...) Therefore, efficient labour markets that promote a high level of employment and are able to absorb shocks without generating excessive unemployment are essential (...)';
2. notes the importance of the fact that the proposal puts the emphasis on re-integrating unemployed people into the labour market, giving employment services the task of taking charge of the person, and involving all business and social stakeholders and the public sector to support their integration;
3. highlights the emphasis placed on instruments to govern the system, identifying it as part of the one-stop-shop strategy;
4. underlines the importance of tackling long-term unemployment so as to ensure the well-functioning of local economies; underlines that long-term unemployment is not sustainable and recalls the importance of forecasting skills needs and matching them with labour market needs. In areas with significant skills mismatches or shortages, training programmes to develop the necessary skills need to be reinforced. A particular focus should be on language skills for unemployed migrants and asylum seekers;
5. draws attention to the fact that the proposal also has significant implications when it comes to tackling poverty, which is still one of the most difficult Europe 2020 targets to meet owing to the consequences of the economic crisis.

**General comments**

However, while doing so, the Committee notes that the proposal seems to overlook certain elements, and in particular:

6. points out the need to boost public employment services and to make them more effective and efficient. The recommendation merely proposes greater coordination between support activities, that are still the responsibility of the various countries, and does not give enough attention to the variation that exists in terms of the scale of the problem and the bodies set up to tackle it, as has been observed with the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. In many countries there is therefore a need to significantly boost employment services. As an example of this variation, the ratio between employment service operators and active population is 1:400 in Germany, 1:600 in France and 1:3 000 in Italy;
7. recommends therefore to work more closely together with private employment services and involve temporary work agencies in cases where the public employment services are not able to sufficiently advise and help long-term unemployed;
8. advocates closer cooperation between Member States and the regions in order to reduce the EU unemployment rate as effectively as possible by giving these types of programme more space in the media. For example, the EURES network could be promoted through an advertising campaign involving television, the internet or other mass media in order to enable jobseekers looking for work abroad to get up-to-date information on employment opportunities; therefore recommends establishing international cooperation between employment services and other social services in order to ensure a more efficient and faster exchange of information and data;



9. stresses the need to identify the resources required to adapt to best practices. This can be done using the results of the work done by the European Public Employment Services Network (Decision 573/2014/EU), to estimate the financial resources needed to bring all countries up to the standards set and to suggest ways to support the efforts that each country must make to tackle deficiencies;

10. points out the need to distinguish between the structural component of unemployment and the dynamic created by a particular development in the cycle. Employment services (structured to address the first component) should be designed to adapt rapidly to additional needs created by particularly negative economic cycles. The cost of adapting existing bodies to these needs should be borne by the Member States, which can also use the ERDF and the ESF (under the thematic objective that focuses on strengthening administrative capacity). The effect of the measures can be assessed, and any necessary adjustments to EU specifications reviewed, as part of the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework;

11. emphasises the importance of investing in human capital; nevertheless points out that, since this is a long-term investment, businesses tend to give preference to young people and recent graduates, which puts mature or middle-aged prospective workers at a disadvantage. Combating unemployment requires incentives that encourage mature and middle-aged jobseekers to retrain and ensure that the private and public sectors are interested in these types of people. In order to prevent long-term unemployment, it is equally important to promote lifelong learning which aims to retrain the existing workforce and unqualified workers;

12. highlights the fact that as well as helping to tackle long-term unemployment, this modernisation of employment services could also help address short-term unemployment and unemployment among young people;

13. points out that the proposed modernisation of employment services promises to be a long and difficult process, especially in Member States where the current system is inflexible and bureaucratic. The smooth operation of the one-stop, single points of personal contact will be heavily dependent on the flexibility of the institutions concerned and on appropriate and fast information dissemination. These single points of contact could be responsible for preparing personalised support services, but it must be borne in mind that, depending on the number of jobseekers, this could constitute a substantial administrative burden. These contact points would in any case have to have sufficient and adequately qualified staff, who would not only know how to disseminate existing vacancies but also to assess the personalities and core skills of jobseekers. The Committee therefore calls on Member States to take these factors into consideration when setting up such mechanisms;

14. points out the need to put greater emphasis on demand-side measures, as when the demand for labour stagnates it is difficult for an unemployed person to find work, even if they have an individualised training programme. In this respect, while appreciating the pointers given in the recommendation with the aim of strengthening relations with employers, the Committee believes that it would be useful to give a greater boost towards integrating Structural Funds initiatives in order to strengthen demand for labour. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which target companies able to put forward innovative projects designed to increase the competitiveness of the system, often provide for the possibility of recruiting appropriately trained people. In these cases the link with training activities financed by the ESF could support reintegration of the unemployed. The Member States should encourage integrated use of the funds, not least by simplifying them for SMEs and using the Performance Reserve;

15. notes that, as the long-term unemployed risk becoming marginalised if their reintegration is unsuccessful and when their unemployment benefits come to an end, it is essential that every country provide measures to combat poverty in line with the guidelines that the European Commission has already set out in its recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (2008/867/EC), referred to in the Commission communication towards social investment for growth and cohesion (COM(2013) 083 final). The CoR hopes that Member States will effectively implement the European Commission's recommendations;

16. notes the need, moreover, to make any access to support for those in poverty contingent on accepting community service work, for a limited time-period and as a part of reintegration training pathway;



17. emphasises that training courses to get people back into work must be organised in close cooperation with the institutions concerned in order to make sure that Member States get the best results at all levels, and to reduce labour market and social isolation and poverty levels. The Committee draws attention to the fact that measures like these have a positive impact because they encourage EU citizens who have gone to work in another Member State for financial reasons or to secure a livelihood to return to their country of origin. Economic migration should decrease as work and subsistence opportunities on the local labour market increase;

18. highlights the central role of regional and local authorities, as they are the natural key players in this effort to improve employment services and because in most Member States planning and implementing Structural Funds is their responsibility. Furthermore, these authorities can play an important role in organising and developing vocational and adult training programmes since there is a shortage of adult training centres in many regions, and especially in villages. The role of local and regional authorities is particularly important since they know the local labour market and have contacts with local businesses, which can facilitate practical vocational education. Moreover, people wishing to participate in adult or vocational training have to travel back and forth for several months. This incurs additional costs that jobseekers on a small allowance — or no benefits at all — can ill afford;

19. asks therefore that the Commission's proposal for a recommendation take greater account of the regional dimension of the problem and calls on the Council to consider the key role that local and regional authorities can play in improving the efficiency of employment services.

Brussels, 10 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Markku MARKKULA

---

## Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — European Union Framework for Data Collection in Fisheries

(2016/C 120/08)

**Rapporteur:** Olgierd GEBLEWICZ, President of Westpomerania Region (PL/EPP)

**Reference document:** Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy (recast)

COM(2015) 294 final

### I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

#### Amendment 1

Recital 10

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(10) The definition of ‘end-users’ should be aligned with the definition of ‘end-users of scientific data’ appearing in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 and cover also scientific bodies with an interest in the environmental aspects of fisheries management.	(10) The definition of ‘end-users’ should be aligned with the definition of ‘end-users of scientific data’ appearing in Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 <b>and with the STECF recommendations</b> and cover also scientific bodies with an interest in the environmental aspects of fisheries management.

#### **Reason**

The definition of ‘end-user’ is too broad, especially when end-users can define data-need. Therefore, data end-users should be divided into those end-users that can define data-need and those that only can get access to data.

In its review of DC MAP (ref. STECF Report on Review of DC MAP-(STECF-13-06) Part 1 page 6 and in its Report on DCF Revision Part 4 (STECF-14-07) Pages 43-45 and p. 106, the STECF suggests the following three types of end-users:

- Type 1: Main end users for whom the DCF was designed, including the Commission, any bodies such as ICES and STECF designated by the Commission to provide them with recurrent advice directly supporting CFP decision-making, and other fishery management bodies such as RFMOs and GFCM using DCF data to implement their fishery management policies.
- Type 2: Other bodies such as Advisory Councils or subcontractors from whom the Commission may request advice or analysis based on DCF data.
- Type 3: All other bodies such as NGOs, Fishermen’s organisations and Universities with an interest in using DCF data for their own purposes.

All three types of end-users can get access to data but only Type 1 and type 2 can contribute to the data-need procedures.

**Amendment 2**

## Recital 14

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(14) Data needs for fisheries policies not directly regulated by Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, such as those relating to Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007 and Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002, should also be covered by this Regulation	(14) Data needs for fisheries policies not directly regulated by Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, such as those relating to Regulation (EC) No 1100/2007, <b>Regulation (EC) No 812/2004</b> and Regulation (EC) No 2347/2002, should also be covered by this Regulation

**Reason**

To be consistent with Regulation (EC) No 508/2014 Art 77c.

**Amendment 3**

## Article 4

## Establishment of multi-annual Union programmes

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
Article 4	Article 4
Establishment of multi-annual Union programmes	Establishment of multi-annual Union programmes
1. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt, in accordance with Article 23, delegated acts establishing multi-annual Union programmes for the collection and management of biological, technical, environmental, social and economic data concerning the fisheries sector.	1. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt, in accordance with Article 23, delegated acts establishing multi-annual Union programmes for the collection and management of biological, technical, environmental, social and economic data concerning the fisheries sector.
2. Multi-annual Union programmes shall be established after consulting the Regional Coordination Groups referred to in Article 8, the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and any other relevant scientific advisory body.	2. Multi-annual Union programmes shall be established after consulting the Regional Coordination Groups referred to in Article 8, the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) and any other relevant scientific advisory body.
3. When establishing a multi-annual Union programme, the Commission shall take account of:	3. When establishing a multi-annual Union programme, the Commission shall take account of:
(a) <b>the</b> information needs for the management of the common fisheries policy;	(a) information needs <b>and availability</b> for the management of the common fisheries policy;
(b) the need and relevance of data for decisions on fisheries management and protection of the ecosystem including vulnerable species and habitats,	(b) the need and relevance of data for decisions on fisheries management and protection of the ecosystem including vulnerable species and habitats,

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(c) the need to support impact assessments of policy measures,	(c) the need to support impact assessments of policy measures,
(d) costs and benefits,	(d) costs and benefits,
(e) existing time-series,	(e) existing time-series,
(f) the need to avoid duplication of data collection,	(f) the need to avoid duplication of data collection,
(g) regional specificities,	(g) regional specificities,
(h) the international obligations of the Union and its Member States.	(h) the international obligations of the Union and its Member States.

**Reason**

In order to minimise additional data collection costs and since all data by genus and by type are already being processed, new data collection obligations should not be created without consulting all stakeholders.

**Amendment 4**

## Article 6

## National work plans

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
1. Without prejudice to their current data collection obligations under Union law, Member States shall collect data within the framework of an operational programme, as referred to in Article 18 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014, and a work plan drawn up in accordance with the multi-annual Union programme and pursuant to Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014.	1. Without prejudice to their current data collection obligations under Union law, Member States shall collect data within the framework of an operational programme, as referred to in Article 18 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014, and a work plan drawn up in accordance with the multi-annual Union programme and pursuant to Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014.
2. Member States' work plans shall contain a detailed description of the following:	2. Member States' work plans shall contain a detailed description of the following:
(a) the frequency by which the data will be collected;	(a) the frequency by which the data will be collected;
(b) the source of the data, the procedures and methods to collect and process the data into the data sets that will be provided to end-users;	(b) the source of the data, the procedures and methods to collect and process the data into the data sets that will be provided to end-users;
(c) the quality assurance and quality control framework to ensure adequate quality of the data in accordance with Article 13;	(c) the quality assurance and quality control framework to ensure adequate quality of the data in accordance with Article 13;
(d) how and when the data are needed;	(d) how and when the data are needed <b>as defined by main end-users;</b>

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>(e) the international and regional cooperation arrangements, including bilateral and multilateral agreements concluded to achieve the objectives of this Regulation; and</p> <p>(f) how the international obligations of the Union and its Member States have been taken into account.</p> <p>3. In preparing its work plan, each Member State shall coordinate its efforts with other Member States, notably in the same marine region, to ensure sufficient and efficient coverage and avoid duplication of data collection activities.</p> <p>4. Each Member State shall ensure compliance of its work plan with the applicable joint recommendations by the Regional Coordination Groups where such joint recommendations have been approved by the Commission in the form of a regional work plan in accordance with Article 8.</p>	<p>(e) the international and regional cooperation arrangements, including bilateral and multilateral agreements concluded to achieve the objectives of this Regulation; and</p> <p>(f) how the international obligations of the Union and its Member States have been taken into account.</p> <p>3. In preparing its work plan, each Member State shall coordinate its efforts <b>and cooperate</b> with other Member States, notably in the same marine region, to ensure sufficient and efficient coverage and avoid duplication of data collection activities.</p> <p>4. Each Member State shall ensure compliance of its work plan with the applicable joint recommendations by the Regional Coordination Groups where such joint recommendations have been approved by the Commission in the form of a regional work plan in accordance with Article 8.</p>

### **Reason**

This regulation proposes that data main end-users should be involved in defining data needs and should be able to launch data calls when needed. Therefore, main end-users should be able to define data needs and launch data calls at any time. At the time when Member States should be drawing up work plans, data needs and the dates for data calls, the deadlines for having finalised the data for use by the main end-users may not be known.

It is important that Member States in the same region not only coordinate but also actively **cooperate**, cf. clause No 46 in the Basic Regulation ('Member States should cooperate with each other and with the Commission to coordinate data collection activities'). This should be also compatible with the title and content of Art 8 of the draft regulation under consideration.

## **Amendment 5**

### Article 7

#### National correspondents

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>1. Each Member State shall designate a national correspondent and shall inform the Commission thereof. The national correspondent shall serve as the focal point for exchange of information between the Commission and the Member State regarding the preparation and implementation of the work plans.</p> <p>2. The national correspondent shall furthermore carry out the following tasks:</p>	<p>1. Each Member State shall designate a national correspondent and shall inform the Commission thereof. The national correspondent shall serve as the focal point for exchange of information between the Commission and the Member State regarding the preparation and implementation of the work plans, <b>and shall be included in all communications relevant to the DC-MAP, including about data submissions, reporting and relevant meetings.</b></p> <p>2. The national correspondent shall furthermore carry out the following tasks:</p>

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>(a) coordinate the preparation of the annual report referred to in Article 10;</p> <p>(b) ensure the transmission of information within the Member State; and</p> <p>(c) ensure attendance of relevant experts in meetings organised by the Commission and participation in the relevant Regional Coordination Groups referred to in Article 8.</p> <p>3. If several bodies in a Member State are participating in the implementation of the work plan, the national correspondent shall be responsible for the coordination of that work.</p>	<p>(a) coordinate the preparation of the annual report referred to in Article 10;</p> <p>(b) ensure the transmission of information within the Member State; and</p> <p>(c) ensure attendance of relevant experts in meetings organised by the Commission and participation in the relevant Regional Coordination Groups referred to in Article 8.</p> <p><b>(d) ensure, where necessary, consultation with local or regional authorities from coastal areas with legal or financial powers in the fisheries sector and with local or regional authorities where fisheries play an important role and provide them with information.</b></p> <p>3. If several bodies in a Member State are participating in the implementation of the work plan, the national correspondent shall be responsible for the coordination of that work.</p>

### **Reason**

As local and regional authorities have a good knowledge of fisheries and may have legal and financial powers in the fisheries sector, they need the necessary information on how the sector is performing. They also play a very important role in implementing Regulation (EC) No 508/2014, which is the implementing instrument for the CFP.

## **Amendment 6**

### Article 8

#### Coordination and cooperation

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>1. In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, Member States shall coordinate their actions with other Member States and make every effort to coordinate their actions with third countries having sovereignty or jurisdiction over waters in the same marine region. For this purpose, a Regional Coordination Group shall be established by the relevant Member States in each Marine Region.</p> <p>2. Regional Coordination Groups shall consist of experts from Member States, the Commission, <b>and</b> relevant end-users of data.</p>	<p>1. In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, Member States shall coordinate their actions with other Member States and make every effort to coordinate their actions with third countries having sovereignty or jurisdiction over waters in the same marine region, <b>as defined by the ICES or FAO</b>. For this purpose, a Regional Coordination Group shall be established by the relevant Member States in each Marine Region.</p> <p>2. Regional Coordination Groups shall consist of experts from Member States, the Commission, relevant end-users of data <b>as well as representatives of coastal local and regional authorities with legal and financial powers in the fisheries sector, and representatives of local or regional authorities where fisheries play an important role.</b></p>

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>3. Regional Coordination Groups shall draw up and agree on rules of procedures for their activities.</p> <p>4. Regional Coordination Groups shall coordinate with each other and with the Commission where issues affect several regions.</p> <p>5. Regional Coordination Groups may prepare joint recommendations in the form of a draft of a regional work plan regarding procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing of data as referred to in paragraph 2(a) and (b) and paragraph 4 of Article 5, and regionally coordinated sampling strategies. In doing so, the Regional Coordination Groups shall take into account the opinion of STECF when relevant. Those recommendations shall be submitted to the Commission, which shall verify whether the draft joint recommendations are compatible with the provisions of this Regulation and with the Union's multiannual programme and, if so, approve the regional work plan by way of implementing acts.</p> <p>6. Where regional work plans are approved by the Commission, they replace the relevant parts of the work plans drawn up by each Member State. Member States shall update their work plans accordingly.</p> <p>7. The Commission may adopt implementing acts laying down rules on procedures, format and timetables for the submission and approval of regional work plans, as referred to in paragraph 5.</p> <p>Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 24(2).</p>	<p>3. Regional Coordination Groups shall draw up and agree on rules of procedures for their activities.</p> <p>4. Regional Coordination Groups shall coordinate with each other and with the Commission where issues affect several regions, <b>as defined by the ICES or FAO, including European waters geographically located in CECAF areas.</b></p> <p>5. Regional Coordination Groups may prepare joint recommendations in the form of a draft of a regional work plan regarding procedures, methods, quality assurance and quality control for collecting and processing of data as referred to in paragraph 2(a) and (b) and paragraph 4 of Article 5, and regionally coordinated sampling strategies. In doing so, the Regional Coordination Groups shall take into account the opinion of STECF when relevant. Those recommendations shall be submitted to the Commission, which shall verify whether the draft joint recommendations are compatible with the provisions of this Regulation and with the Union's multiannual programme and, if so, approve the regional work plan by way of implementing acts.</p> <p>6. Where regional work plans are approved by the Commission, they replace the relevant parts of the work plans drawn up by each Member State. Member States shall update their work plans accordingly.</p> <p>7. The Commission may adopt implementing acts laying down rules on procedures, format and timetables for the submission and approval of regional work plans, as referred to in paragraph 5.</p> <p>Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 24(2).</p>

### **Reason**

As local and regional authorities have a good knowledge of fisheries and are involved in managing this sector by virtue of their legal or financial powers, they need the necessary information on how the sector is performing. They also play a very important role in implementing Regulation (EC) No 508/2014, which is the implementing instrument for the CFP. The reference to the ICES is designed to clarify the meaning of 'marine region'.

ICES defined the marine areas only in North Atlantic zone and it did not cover Mediterranean and Black Sea. Division by FAO covers the whole oceans.



**Amendment 7**

## Article 16

## Procedure for ensuring availability of detailed and aggregated data

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>1. Member States shall set up adequate processes and electronic technologies to ensure an effective application of Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and shall refrain from any unnecessary restrictions to the widest possible dissemination of detailed and aggregated data.</p> <p>2. Member States shall ensure appropriate safeguards, in case data include information relating to identified or identifiable natural persons. <b><i>The Commission shall be empowered to adopt, in accordance with Article 23, delegated acts defining appropriate safeguards to be used when dealing with such information.</i></b></p> <p>3. Member States shall ensure that relevant detailed and aggregated data are updated and made available to end-users within 1 month from the receipt of a request for those data. In case of requests made by other <b><i>interested parties</i></b>, Member States shall ensure that the data are updated and made available within 2 months from the receipt of a request for those data.</p> <p>4. Where detailed data are requested for scientific publication, Member States may, in order to protect the professional interests of data collectors, require that the publication of data be delayed by 3 years from the date to which the data refer. Member States shall inform the end-users and the Commission of any such decision and of the reasons therefor.</p>	<p>1. Member States shall set up adequate processes and electronic technologies to ensure an effective application of Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1380/2013, and shall refrain from any unnecessary restrictions to the widest possible dissemination of detailed and aggregated data.</p> <p>2. Member States shall ensure appropriate safeguards, in case data include information relating to identified or identifiable natural persons.</p> <p>3. Member States shall ensure that relevant detailed and aggregated data are updated and made available to end-users, <b><i>as defined by STECF</i></b>, within 1 month from the receipt of a request for those data, <b><i>if such requests follow a predefined annual timetable</i></b>. In <b><i>the</i></b> case of requests made <b><i>by either main end-users outside the annual timetable or by other than main end-users</i></b>, Member States shall ensure that the data are updated and made available within 2 months from the receipt of a request for those data.</p> <p>4. Where detailed data are requested for scientific publication, Member States may, in order to protect the professional interests of data collectors, require that the publication of data be delayed by 3 years from the date to which the data refer. Member States shall inform the end-users and the Commission of any such decision and of the reasons therefor.</p>

**Reason**

To be consistent with the definition of end-users, Data protection is a primary concern. The provisions established and the guarantees provided should not be studied exclusively by the European Commission. STECF (Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries of EC) provides clear definition of end-users.

**Amendment 8**

## Article 17

## Compatible data storage and exchange systems

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
<p>1. In view of reducing costs and facilitating access to data for end-users <b>and other interested parties</b>, Member States, the Commission, scientific advisory bodies and any relevant end-users shall cooperate to develop compatible data storage and exchange systems, taking into account the provisions of Directive 2007/2/EC. Those systems shall also facilitate dissemination of information to other <b>interested parties</b>. Regional work plans referred to in Article 8(6) may serve as a basis for agreement on such systems.</p> <p>2. Safeguards shall be established, where appropriate, in case the data storage and exchange systems referred to in paragraph 1 include information relating to identified or identifiable natural persons. <b>The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts, in accordance with Article 23, defining appropriate safeguards to be used when dealing with such information.</b></p> <p>3. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt implementing acts laying down rules on procedures, formats, codes and timetables to be used to ensure the compatibility of data storage and exchange systems. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 24(2).</p>	<p>1. In view of reducing costs and facilitating access to data for end-users, Member States, the Commission, scientific advisory bodies and any relevant end-users shall cooperate to develop compatible data storage and exchange systems, taking into account the provisions of Directive 2007/2/EC. Those systems shall also facilitate dissemination of information to other <b>than main end-users as defined by STECF</b>. Regional work plans referred to in Article 8(6) may serve as a basis for agreement on such systems.</p> <p>2. Safeguards shall be established, where appropriate, in case the data storage and exchange systems referred to in paragraph 1 include information relating to identified or identifiable natural persons.</p> <p>3. The Commission shall be empowered to adopt implementing acts laying down rules on procedures, formats, codes and timetables to be used to ensure the compatibility of data storage and exchange systems. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 24(2).</p>

**Reason**

To be consistent with the definition of end-users.

Data protection is a primary concern. The provisions established and the guarantees provided should not be studied exclusively by the European Commission.

**II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS,

1. welcomes the Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the common fisheries policy and considers it an important cornerstone in the establishment of a regionalised common fisheries policy;

2. considers data collection vital for improving the knowledge of fish stocks and the long-term management of fisheries. Improved data collection would allow for a more reliable assessment of maximum sustainable yield and the achievement of long-term sustainability as prescribed in Council Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013;

3. considers the proposal to be a valuable instrument to achieve sustainable fishing by 2020;

4. notes that the progressive shift of attention to the effects of fishing on the ecosystem has increased the need to take into account fishing's impact on ecosystems, a principle formulated in Article 2 of the new CFP as one of the main objectives (Council Regulation (EC) No 1380/2013);

5. notes that the reliable collection of data on marine species, commercial or non-commercial, together with other relevant environmental data, will lead to a more accurate assessment of the condition of stocks and also of marine ecosystems and their dynamics;
6. has doubts about reducing the frequency of data collection, which could affect the monitoring and development of series, especially in the case of rapidly evolving data, and could have a significant impact on management measures;
7. considers the proposal to be an essential step for the establishment of the ecosystem-based approach of the reformed common fisheries policy;
8. suggests that the first step in assessing the impact of fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems would be to analyse the overlap between the spatial distribution of fishing effort and the location of vulnerable marine habitats. A prerequisite is the availability of habitat maps: where such maps are not available, specific studies funded as part of direct management measures should be carried out. As a second step, the impact of different types of fishing gear on different habitat types should be detailed;
9. notes the great potential for increasing interoperability with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
10. suggests that using research vessels as common platforms for DCF and MSFD purposes is the best way of minimising operational costs. However, sufficient availability of human resources and equipment in Member States should be considered to enable new operations to be carried out;
11. supports the objective of tailoring the availability of data more closely to management needs, but nevertheless cautions against the consequences of the cost-benefit or cost-use analysis suggested by the Commission. For certain data, surveys at sea cannot be replaced with less expensive methods;
12. calls upon the Member States to perform an assessment of their existing data collection systems in order to ensure interoperability. Such assessment exercises should review compliance, data-transmission protocols, collection, processing, submission and quality assessment. Efficient regional data collection as well as the establishment of regional data bases should translate into the better integration of collected data into management plans;
13. calls upon all stakeholders to work, where possible, towards ensuring the open availability of collected data in a format that can be used by relevant users, including local and regional authorities. It is vital to make more information available to individual regions and to take better account of their needs;
14. notes, that scientific fisheries data is already widely available, but rarely in a format that can be easily employed by LRAs due to the lack of a suitable interface and know-how at the local level;
15. emphasises the importance of data collection for the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the blue economy, taking into account the need for data collection in order to fill existing knowledge gaps;
16. stresses that social and economic data are important to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and argues that harmonising these data could contribute to greater harmonisation in the medium term and improve social regulations in these sectors;
17. notes however, that funding from the EMFF should be used only for data collection under the CFP and EMFF regulations;
18. calls for data collection and scientific advice that meets the CFP's needs to be given funding that reflects the ambitious targets of the CFP. Should data be collected for purposes other than the CFP, then that data should be financed through means other than the EMFF;

19. underlines the importance of collecting socioeconomic data for the fish-processing industry. The origin of processed fish is an important metric for understanding the value chain in small fishing communities and the availability of such information could greatly benefit the policy approach to local small-scale and coastal fisheries at the national and European levels. The collection and careful analysis of socio/economic data such as the gender balance of employees and employment types could open up new possibilities for the creation of jobs and economic growth in coastal areas. It is estimated that for every EUR 1 invested in data collection, control and enforcement in the fishing industry, there is a potential 10:1 return;

20. reiterates that collecting and sharing marine information should not create any disadvantages or additional administrative burdens for local and regional authorities and economic operators <sup>(1)</sup>;

21. welcomes the European Commission's inclusion of socioeconomic data from aquaculture in its proposal. The Committee considers that the blue economy has great potential to contribute to the European agenda for jobs and growth, especially as it creates valuable jobs in structurally weak regions. Improving data collection will also have positive impact on innovation and competition, and will help to reduce uncertainties connected with marine areas <sup>(2)</sup>;

22. welcomes the fact that the proposal upholds the principle of proportionality, as laid out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union;

23. welcomes the considerable efforts the European Commission has made to apply the principles of better regulation and simplification to the proposal;

24. proposes that the legislator establishes a classification of the main types of end-users in order to be consistent with STECF recommendations:

Type 1: Main end users for whom the DCF was designed, including the Commission, any bodies such as ICES and STECF designated by the Commission to provide them with recurrent advice directly supporting CFP decision-making, and other fishery management bodies such as RFMOs and GFCM using DCF data to implement their fishery management policies.

Type 2: Other bodies such as Advisory Councils or subcontractors from whom the Commission may request advice or analysis based on DCF data.

Type 3: All other bodies such as local and regional authorities to which fisheries play an important role, NGOs, fishermen's organisations and universities with an interest in using DCF data for their own purposes;

25. calls for the collection of data under the CFP to cover not just surveying fish stocks in order to achieve sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, but also the collection of reliable data for dealing with fish predators (such as otters, cormorants and grey herons) and other highly protected species (such as beavers).

Brussels, 10 February 2016.

*The President  
of the European Committee of the Regions*

Markku MARKKULA

---

<sup>(1)</sup> NAT-V/044

<sup>(2)</sup> NAT-V/044











ISSN 1977-091X (electronic edition)  
ISSN 1725-2423 (paper edition)



**Publications Office of the European Union**  
2985 Luxembourg  
LUXEMBOURG

**EN**