

## I

*(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)*

## RESOLUTIONS

## COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

98TH PLENARY SESSION, 29-30 NOVEMBER 2012

**Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on 'Priorities of the Committee of the Regions for 2013 based on the Legislative and Work Programme of the European Commission'**

(2013/C 17/01)

## THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- having regard to the CoR resolution of 19 July 2012 on its priorities in view of the Work Programme of the European Commission <sup>(1)</sup> and its Resolution relating to the conclusions of the European Spring Council 2012 <sup>(2)</sup>,
- having regard to the European Commission's Communication on its Work Programme for 2013 <sup>(3)</sup> and its Protocol of Cooperation with the European Commission signed on 16 February 2012,
- having regard to the European Parliament legislative Resolution of 11 September 2012 on the Commission Work Programme for 2013 <sup>(4)</sup>,

**Main political priorities for 2013**

1. considers the necessity to overcome the economic, social and financial crisis as the main challenge for the European Union. Therefore, strongly supports efforts to increase and maintain the EU's focus on:

— the Europe 2020 Strategy,

— the Single Market,

— targeted investments, particularly in research and innovation, whereby (European) education and research establishments, business and governments (the 'triple helix') cooperate with each other to achieve smart implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy,

— and delivery of results, in conjunction with local and regional authorities;

2. calls for an ambitious Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and genuine own resources for the Union;

3. welcomes the emphasis on youth unemployment and looks forward to helping to shape the forthcoming Youth Employment Package;

4. recalls its enhanced responsibilities conferred by the Lisbon Treaty with regard to the subsidiarity principle, and its commitment to becoming a reference point for its correct application; in this respect underlines the importance it will give to monitoring EU initiatives included in the CWP 2013, and draws attention to its dedicated work programme for subsidiarity monitoring in 2013, to be adopted in January;

<sup>(1)</sup> CdR 1031/2012 fin.

<sup>(2)</sup> CdR 42/2012 fin.

<sup>(3)</sup> COM(2012) 629 final.

<sup>(4)</sup> P7\_TA(2012) 0319.

5. supports the idea of a thorough discussion on the future of Europe from the perspective of democratic legitimacy, accountability and effective integration and considers it vital to define its political position on the future role of the regional and local level, including on the possible changes in the EU institutional settings; the CoR will therefore give impetus to any debate on Treaty reform in 2013 through the organisation of political debates, and by better profiling the subsidiarity principle and the concept of multi-level-governance as important tools for attaining these objectives;

6. supports the call made by the European Parliament in its resolution of 20 November 2012 on Member States to consider signing to a 'Social Investment Pact'. This 'Social Investment Pact', conceived on the model of the 'Euro Plus Pact', would set investment targets for social investments to be taken by Member States in a given timeframe in order to meet the employment, social and education targets of the Europe 2020 strategy in line with the Annual Growth Survey and National Reform Programmes;

7. will continue to scrutinise the territorial impact of the European Commission's legislative programme;

### Economic and Monetary Union

8. requests that it be consulted on the EC Blueprint for a comprehensive and genuine European Monetary Union, given the territorial dimension of each of its four pillars;

9. calls for better coordination of economic and social policies between the European and national levels in the context of the European Semester and demands stronger involvement of local and regional authorities in this coordination. The CoR will continue to monitor progress in this direction while seeking closer cooperation with the European Parliament;

10. strongly supports the call made by the European Parliament on the Commission <sup>(5)</sup> to 'fully address', in its next Annual Growth Survey, 'the role of the EU budget in the European Semester process by providing factual and concrete data on its triggering, catalytic, synergetic and complementary effects on overall public expenditure at local, regional and national levels';

11. welcomes that effective mechanisms are put in place at the EU level to ensure sustainable budgetary policies in the Member States but warns of the risks that coordination of

budget policy at EU level could have for local and regional authorities and the delivery of adequate public services;

12. regrets that its proposal for a Green Paper on the synergies between the EU, national and sub-national budgets has not been included in the Work Programme; recalls specifically its support for a European communication on the quality of public spending which should address, *inter alia*, the issue of separating *current spending* and *investment* in the budget deficit calculations so as to avoid investments with long-term net benefits being calculated as a negative;

13. commits itself to thoroughly analyse the local and regional dimension of the Banking Union;

14. requests clarification on the legal instrument envisaged for the Bank Account Initiative;

### Cohesion policy

15. strongly advocates, in view of the ongoing negotiations on the MFF, that Cohesion Policy is an investment policy which needs both an effective spending and a vigorous budget which cannot be cut down if we want to stimulate growth and jobs, increase the competitiveness and fight against territorial disparities within and amongst all EU regions, especially in times of crisis;

16. regrets that the 'Code of Conduct' proposed by the European Commission has not been taken up in the Cyprus Presidency; calls on the European Commission to promote and scrutinise the involvement of local and regional authorities in the design of the partnership agreements and the relevant operational programmes, and requests a report on this matter by the end of 2013. In that regard, the Committee of the Regions will follow closely the related negotiations based on the Commission's country-specific negotiation mandates for the CSF Funds for the period 2014-2020, notably in the light of the partnership principle;

17. requests a formal consultation by the European Commission in relation to the review on the guidelines for regional aid;

18. calls for a European rural development strategy to re-balance resources for rural areas whose development level is still below the EU average and often well below predominantly urban areas;

<sup>(5)</sup> European Parliament resolution: 'European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2012 priorities'.

19. calls for the adoption of the revised Regulation on the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation separate from the legislative package on Structural Funds;

### Single Market

20. regrets the slow pace of implementation of the Single Market Act;

21. notes the Commission's intention to present a proposal on obligatory electronic invoices in public procurement, but points out that complete change to electronic systems will be challenging for some local and regional authorities which might require assistance or a longer transition period;

22. calls for the creation of Small Business Act Partnerships to further implement the Small Business Act (SBA) at sub-national level; considers that the European Entrepreneurial Regions (EER) initiative, awarded by the CoR since 2010, could be a source of inspiration in further promoting entrepreneurship, especially among young people;

23. seeks explanation from the Commission as to why the eHealth Action Plan, which the Committee of the Regions had previously called for and which was announced in the 2012 Work Programme has not been presented yet, and does not appear among the items planned for adoption until the end of the 2012 nor in the 2013 work programme;

24. believes that greater legal certainty is required for activities in the social economy and calls in this context for a statute of a European mutual society;

25. welcomes the European Commission's intention to modernise EU state aid rules and to reduce administrative burdens by adapting the general block exemptions, and calls in this regard for an increase of the *de minimis* threshold;

26. regrets that the European Commission did not formally consult the CoR in relation to the elaboration of the new guidelines governing the application of EU state aid rules to the public funding of broadband networks;

27. welcomes the focus in Annex II of the Work Programme on concrete initiatives on simplification and the reduction of administrative burdens, and intends to contribute to their implementation;

### Building tomorrow's networks

28. asks the European Commission to take steps towards resolving connectivity problems between Member States and

between regions; calls on the European Commission in this context to step up its efforts aimed at reducing the energy isolation of individual Member States and to put in place a fully operational internal energy market by 2014;

29. regrets the absence of a clear commitment by the European Commission to strengthen its policies aimed at the development of a modern grid infrastructure, and specifically the roll-out of smart grids and smart metering, which are important elements for energy efficiency and security of supply; asks the European Commission to promote measures that facilitate the spread of micro-production of energy and its integration into the distribution grids;

30. regrets that the Commission work programme does not entail further initiatives in relation to urban mobility; reiterates in that context its suggestion that electronic and smart, for example mobile, ticketing across all modes of transport is an essential prerequisite for sustainable urban mobility, and hopes that this issue could also be addressed in the planned follow-up to the Green Paper on 'an integrated European market for card, internet and mobile payments';

31. expects the European Commission to seize every opportunity to achieve consistent implementation of the goals set by the review of TEN-T;

32. looks forward to the forthcoming proposal on the future EU ports policy and recalls the need to subject it to a Territorial Impact Assessment;

### Growth, jobs and inclusion

33. considers that labour mobility within and among Member States is an important factor in the fight against unemployment and therefore supports the plans to modernise public employment services with particular attention to the reform of EURES, currently performing below its possibilities; however also reminds that public employment services are often run by local and regional authorities which must be fully consulted on the reforms;

34. regrets that the European Commission has not taken up the CoR's repeated call for a European agenda for social housing, which would inter alia clarify the competition rules applicable to social housing and empower local and regional authorities to provide decent and affordable social housing, to promote social mix and to fight discrimination;

35. points out the importance of retirement pensions for local and regional authorities, who are large employers and expects the Commission proposal on this matter to include proposals on better cross-border transferability of occupational pensions;

36. considers the establishment of the platform to fight undeclared work to be a timely initiative; and considers it essential that regional enforcement bodies and labour inspectorates be included in this platform; sees, furthermore, strong possibilities for synergies between this platform and the proposals to enhance enforcement of the rules on the posting of workers;

37. asks the European Commission to ensure that in its new guidelines on State aid for films and other audiovisual works, the principle of territorial spending obligations, as described in the 2001 Cinema Communication, be maintained, in accordance with Article 107(3)d TFEU;

38. regrets the low level of ambition in the Work Programme in relation to culture, given its importance for a European identity and as a driver for growth;

#### **Using Europe's resources better**

39. welcomes the publication of the 7th Environmental Action Framework which is a key tool to translate the EU 2020 goals into environmental action and which should focus on improving implementation of EU environmental policy in close cooperation with all levels of governance, on integration of environmental concerns into all policy areas, and on the international dimension of environmental challenges;

40. asks that the EU Adaptation Strategy for climate change include a section on specific adaptation action at regional and municipal level as well as guidelines and support in terms of funding and governance solutions for local and regional decision makers, as proposed by the Covenant of Mayors;

41. is committed to working with the European Commission to successfully implement the outcome of the UNCCC in Doha as well as the Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe;

42. expects the review of EU air policy to reinforce the National Emissions Ceiling Directive in order to reduce background concentrations; supports the tightening of standards for vehicles and calls for the tackling of emissions from shipping, air traffic and agriculture, while simplifying the indicators and

criteria for measurement. It also calls for the integration of EU air quality policy with other policy areas, in particular transport, housing, industry, energy and climate;

43. renews its commitment for reinforced cooperation with the European Commission on the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020,

44. welcomes the invitation by the European Investment Bank for the Committee of the Regions to contribute to its future policy on energy loans and calls for access to loans for investments in the areas of energy efficiency and renewables to be facilitated for small and medium-sized businesses and local and regional authorities; considers in this context that the increasing danger of energy poverty should be taken into account in EU energy policy initiatives;

#### **A Europe for citizens**

45. seeks to be involved in the design of all EU actions related to 2013 European Year of Citizens to increase citizens' awareness and understanding of their rights, in order to remove any remaining obstacles to their application and enhancing the notion of Union citizenship;

46. welcomes the European Commission's intention to prepare an anti-corruption report and a judicial scoreboard, as mechanisms that will help to strengthen the trust of citizens in public administrations at all levels, and offers its assistance in their development;

47. looks forward to working with the European Commission in the development of the integration network, with a view to achieving unity in diversity;

#### **Europe as a global actor**

48. recommends that the Commission go into greater detail in its enlargement strategy reports about regional and local self-government, and that it stress to enlargement countries - where appropriate - the need for decentralisation;

49. requests that the access of local and regional actors in enlargement countries and in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries to the specific EU funds for this area be facilitated, and supports the further use of existing programmes, including Erasmus Mundus and EGTC to partners in neighbourhood countries;

50. reaffirms its intention to continue the positive cooperation with the European Commission in the context of the Local Administration Facility programme in order to improve local capacity building and promote knowledge of the EU and its procedures in candidate and pre-candidate countries; invites the Commission to explore the possibility of expanding it to local governments in the ENP countries;

51. welcomes the distinction made by the European Commission between the role of local and regional authorities and civil society in delivering development cooperation policy

by presenting separate Communications, and calls on the European Parliament to follow the same approach;

52. expects cities and regions to be involved in the definition of the EU position in view of the Millennium Development Goals Summit in 2015;

53. instructs the President of the Committee of the Regions to submit the present resolution to the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Parliament, the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU and the forthcoming Irish and Lithuanian Presidencies;

Brussels, 30 November 2012.

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

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