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*Plenary sitting*

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# REPORT

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

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: Marcos Ros Sempere

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## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT - SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS**

### ***A challenging global context - cohesion more important than ever***

A number of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine, which caused an unprecedented refugee crisis and a serious energy crisis, as well as the aggravating climate emergency, showed that territories are increasingly interdependent. In the current challenging global context, the EU needs to ensure positive future perspectives for all places and people. Economic, social and territorial cohesion therefore become ever more important to ensure that Europe stays united.

In this context, it is more necessary than ever that the Union's institutions together with national, regional and municipal authorities cooperate closely to achieve resilience, sustainability and inclusiveness through participative and innovative integrated territorial development.

### ***The key role of integrated territorial development***

Integrated territorial development is key for strengthening resilience and triggering prosperity in all regions. It helps coordinate regional and local development and nurture local democracy through inclusive participation. Integrated territorial development is relevant to all EU territories, and it can open up new development pathways towards a smarter, knowledge-based, greener economy, creating quality employment and social progress in areas other than urban areas. Territorial or local development strategies address territorial development beyond cities, functional urban areas and metropolitan areas, putting local authorities at the centre of the governance.

### ***CPR tools: ITI and CLLD***

Integrated territorial and local development strategies promoted by EU cohesion policy are relevant tools to sustain this process. In particular, Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) are the main mechanisms used to implement cohesion policy funding in an integrated and place-based manner, with the active involvement of regional and local authorities. The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) for each programming period regulates ITI and CLLD, as a means to deliver cohesion policy in a territorially integrated way in order to increase its effectiveness.

In particular, the CPR for the 2021-2027 programming period has dedicated Title III Chapter II to the territorial development, in view of its fundamental importance in the cohesion policy architecture. Articles 28-34 of the CPR provide that the promotion of sustainable and integrated development of all territories is delivered through territorial tools, notably ITI, CLLD or 'any other integrated territorial tool designed within a national strategy'.

ITI and CLLD are the key instruments to address one of the cohesion policy's five broad Policy Objectives, notably the Policy Objective 5 "a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories". These tools have first been introduced in 2014 and they have been further strengthened in the legislation for the 2021-2027 period, emphasising the key role of integrated territorial strategies in achieving cohesion

objectives.

ITI and CLLD are intended to facilitate a bottom-up approach for a territorial development by involving local and regional governments, by facilitating dialogue between the various stakeholders and by increasing cooperation between the public and private sector, as well as by fostering cooperation and the transfer of information between the top and bottom levels of government.

The ERDF regulation 2021-2027 provides more details about integrated approach (Articles 7-9) as well as an earmarking. In particular, 8% of ERDF funding at national level, compared to 5% for the previous programming period, must be allocated to sustainable urban development (SUD) in the form of ITI, CLLD or any other integrated territorial tool.

### ***ITI and CLLD implementation at a glance***

This report draws lessons on the experience during the 2014-2020 period, but also looks forward to what is foreseen in the current 2021-2027 period so as to draw useful conclusions. In particular, this report aims to take stock on how ITI and CLLD have been implemented during the 2014-2020 period and what evolutions we can already observe for the 2021-2027 period, focusing on qualitative rather than quantitative data. The success of territorial instruments should anyway be evaluated beyond hard figures and numbers. There are other softer factors that are more complex to evaluate, such as cohesion within the territory targeted, wellbeing of residents, strengthened social and human capital, new forms of cooperative culture in policy-making or cooperative governance models that can only be observed in the long run.

It is worth noting that, in the 2014-2020 period, funding planned for territorial and urban strategies amounts to approximately EUR 30 billion, nearly 10 percent of the total cohesion policy funding for that period. ITI instruments were often used in urban contexts for integrated and sustainable urban development strategies. Accordingly, ITI is one of the preferred instruments for implementing the mandatory minimum 8% earmark of the national ERDF allocation for sustainable urban development. In the period 2014-2020 a number of countries however chose not to use ITI for the urban earmark but a dedicated urban priority axis within their Operational Programme.

When looking closely at the implementation on the ground, we observe indeed a number of different approaches from one area to another. The options to use territorial instruments have been taken up to a very different extent across Member States and across regions.

It is worth noting that the implementation of operations experienced substantial delays at the beginning of the 2014-2020 period. However, the implementation rate for these instruments has significantly improved towards the end of this programming period.

As for CLLD instruments, evidence from the previous period shows that they target smaller rural areas, with a comparatively low take-up across urban areas. Difficulties during the previous period 2014-2020 included, in particular, a lack of awareness and capacity at the local level, together with the perception of a heavy bureaucratic burden and slow absorption of funds.

### ***The role of Territorial Agenda 2030***

Member States are called to ensure coherence and coordination among Funds while avoiding that new economic, social and territorial disparities appear. Place-based approaches and integrated territorial development need to be promoted with utmost priority. This ambitious target cannot be reached without an integrated approach to territorial development as highlighted by the Territorial Agenda 2030.

The Territorial Agenda 2030 defines two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, which have six priorities for developing the European territory as a whole along with all its places. It further aligns the EU's territorial development objectives with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal, underlines the importance of strategic spatial planning and provides orientation for this while strengthening the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels.

The Territorial Agenda 2030, which shares common principles such as a local approach, policy coordination and effective multi-level frameworks with the Urban Agenda for the EU, is rooted in the understanding that Europe faces major economic, social and environmental challenges. It also has great potential to improve living conditions in all places and for all people. This implies that Europe needs policies with a stronger territorial dimension and coordinated approaches that acknowledge and use the diversity and specificities of places.

### ***An intergovernmental declaration that needs to be enhanced***

The Territorial Agenda 2030 is a tool that paves the way for territorial cohesion in Europe, urging a wide range of players to apply its objectives and priorities. However, it is an intergovernmental declaration with no direct legal, financial or institutional implementation instruments. It is worth noting that neither the 2014 Common Provisions Regulation nor the 2021 Common Provisions Regulation make reference to the Territorial Agenda 2020 and the Territorial Agenda 2030 respectively. The European Parliament should therefore reflect on how to make the best use of the Territorial Agenda and consider the inclusion of its priorities in EU legislative processes.

### ***Implementation of Territorial Agenda 2030***

The application of the Territorial Agenda 2030 depends on multilevel cooperation. To inspire key players to take action, seven pilot actions have been launched. Pilot actions demonstrate how Territorial Agenda objectives can be pursued 'on the ground' at local and regional levels. This involves implementation activities, such as working with local and regional actors on how they can address opportunities and challenges linked to their thematic focus. These activities offer examples of place-based approaches, with consensus-oriented stakeholder dialogues. They implement experimental and innovative solutions adapted to local specificities.

Pilot actions for the Territorial Agenda are still at an early stage. The Territorial Agenda 2030 envisages a stocktaking in 2024 including a review of the governance system, implementation progress and relevance of the priorities. This review will start during the Spanish EU Presidency in 2023 and will focus on governance and implementation.

Actions putting the Territorial Agenda 2030 into practice can be taken at any governance level and can vary in character and focus. Despite calls upon key players and efforts to inspire

action through the examples and pilot actions, it seems that application of the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities remains patchy and uneven across the territory of the Union. More concretely, the distribution of the seven pilot actions across Europe is unbalanced. All pilot actions have been initiated by national authorities. Experimental or innovative processes at local and regional levels have been implemented by a few pilot actions. Many compile evidence and produce case studies and reports. Some propose lessons learnt from a national initiative available to actors across Europe.

### *The way forward*

The European Parliament follows closely how European Structural and Investment Funds support the integrated approach to urban and territorial development. It is crucial to understand how Sustainable Urban Development (SUD), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) strategies implemented across Europe within Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods evolve and draw valuable lessons. This is the only way to be able to improve the cohesion policy tools of tomorrow.

We need to explore the investment strategies followed by different perspectives such as geographical unit, spatial focus, thematic concentration, size of population, funding arrangements and implementation mechanisms, in order to be able to adapt the future cohesion policy accordingly and address current deficiencies.

This report will also serve to reinforce the role of the European Parliament, and in particular, its Committee on Regional Development, in the follow-up of the TA and all its actions, as reflected in the document itself.

We should aim to simplify further the administrative process for the management of funds, to include the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities in the legislative instruments and operational programmes of cohesion policy funds, and promote even further the involvement of municipalities, regions and their representative associations during the various stages of implementation of territorial instruments. This includes their participation in the programming, selection and monitoring of ITI and CLLD projects. Our aim should be to mobilise potential beneficiaries and help authorities raise awareness of territorial tools. It is also necessary to develop more sophisticated monitoring and evaluation systems that are able to assess the impacts of these territorial instruments and to better communicate their results.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS  
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that he has received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the report, until the adoption thereof in committee:

<b>Entity and/or person</b>
ESPON
DG of Territory - Portuguese government
German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB), Germany
Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE - Switzerland
Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### **on the implementation of territorial development (CPR, Title III, Chapter II) and its application in the European Territorial Agenda 2030 (2023/2048(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Title XVIII thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy<sup>1</sup> ('the Common Provisions Regulation' – CPR),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund<sup>4</sup>
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) in the years 2021 and 2022 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 as regards resources and application in the years 2021 and 2022 and

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 435, 6.12.2021, p. 1.



Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards resources and the distribution of such support in respect of the years 2021 and 2022<sup>6</sup>,

- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to the Agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (the Paris Agreement),
- having regard to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities and communities,
- having regard to the Territorial Agenda 2030 – A future for all places, adopted at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion on 1 December 2020,
- having regard to the Pact of Amsterdam establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU, agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016,
- having regard to the New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good, adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Matters on 30 November 2020,
- having regard to the Ljubljana Agreement, adopted at the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters on 26 November 2021,
- having regard to the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations on 20 October 2016,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2023 entitled ‘Harnessing talent in Europe’s regions’ (COM(2023)0032),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 February 2022 entitled ‘8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050’ (COM(2022)0034),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 June 2021 entitled ‘A long-term Vision for the EU’s Rural Areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040’ (COM(2021)0345),

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<sup>6</sup> OJ L 437, 28.12.2020, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 320.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2021 entitled ‘Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030’ (COM(2021)0101),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 September 2020 entitled ‘Stepping up Europe’s 2030 climate ambition – Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people (COM(2020)0562),
- having regard to the Commission’s New European Bauhaus initiative launched on 16 September 2020,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 17 June 2022 entitled ‘New European Bauhaus territorial development model (NEB TDM) financial instrument’ (SWD(2022)0172),
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2022 on the new European Bauhaus<sup>8</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2022 on a long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040<sup>9</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report<sup>10</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 February 2022 on the challenges for urban areas in the post-COVID-19 era<sup>11</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments<sup>12</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change<sup>13</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2018 on the role of EU regions and cities in implementing the COP 21 Paris Agreement on climate change<sup>14</sup>,
- having regard to the opinion of 18 September 2020 of the European Economic and Social Committee entitled ‘Revision of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, the Leipzig Charter and the Urban Agenda for the EU’<sup>15</sup>,

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<sup>8</sup> OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 56.

<sup>9</sup> OJ C 177, 17.5.2023, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup> OJ C 342, 6.9.2022, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 125.

<sup>13</sup> OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 145.

- having regard to the in-depth analysis entitled ‘Territorial Agenda 2030 – Implementation Review’, published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies on 7 June 2023<sup>16</sup>,
  - having regard to the study conducted for the Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) entitled ‘Integrated territorial and urban strategies: how are ESIF adding value in 2014-2020’, published in December 2017<sup>17</sup>,
  - having regard to STRAT-Board, the interactive tool developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission and DG REGIO displaying how European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) support the integrated approach to urban and territorial development<sup>18</sup>,
  - having regard to the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies<sup>19</sup> and the Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies<sup>20</sup>, published by the JRC,
  - having regard to the working paper by DG REGIO entitled ‘The geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap’, published in March 2023,
  - having regard to the study conducted for the Council of European Municipalities and Regions entitled ‘ITI and CLLD – The use of integrated territorial tools in cohesion policy’ published in December 2022,
  - having regard to the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities of 2007 and to the New Leipzig Charter – the transformative power of cities for the common good of 30 November 2020,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A9-0420/2023),
- A. whereas cohesion policy remains and should remain the principal investment policy for the EU’s regions and cities, and is not intended to consistently serve as a first choice for financial assistance to face unforeseen events that shake our socio-economy; whereas the Territorial Agenda is the guiding instrument for the EU’s territorial policy, as

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<sup>16</sup> In-depth analysis – ‘Territorial Agenda 2030 – Implementation Review’, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B – Structural and Cohesion Policies, 7 June 2023.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, ‘[Integrated territorial and urban strategies: how are ESIF adding value in 2014-2020? – Final Report](#)’, December 2017.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, ‘[STRAT-Board](#)’.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, ‘[Handbook of territorial and local development strategies](#)’.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, ‘[Handbook of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies](#)’.

reflected in its national programmes and projects, providing orientation for strategic spatial planning and regional development, calling for the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels to be strengthened and seeking to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places and to help achieve the SDGs in Europe;

- B. whereas the challenges that EU regions are facing are identified and managed at territorial level;
- C. whereas the previous and current Common Provisions Regulations make no specific reference to the Territorial Agenda 2020 or 2030 respectively; whereas Title III, Chapter II of the current Common Provisions Regulation provides the basis for the drawing of cohesion policy funds through territorial development strategies; whereas Article 7 of Regulation (EU) 1301/2013<sup>21</sup> refers to sustainable urban development based on integrated sustainable urban strategies as the framework for the selection of single operations;
- D. whereas the place-based approach to policymaking, built on integrated territorial development, aims to unleash unique potential related to territorial resources, knowledge and assets, while recognising the need for tailored solutions in different types of territories;
- E. whereas it appears that the main difficulties encountered by local and regional institutions and civil society for the 2014-2020 period were insufficient technical and administrative support, disproportionate bureaucratic hurdles, a lack of skills and training, knowledge and capacity building, and poor cooperation among different levels of governance, in addition to a slow absorption of funds;
- F. whereas it appears that in regions and administrative units where LEADER is implemented, a mandatory Local Action Group manager contributes to improving the performance and absorption of regional funding;
- G. whereas the richness of the EU's territorial diversity should be seen as a dynamic and complex system in which each region faces development challenges according to its own particular characteristics; whereas growing inequalities between places and between people have reached a critical level and concerted action at all geographical and governance levels is needed to ensure positive future perspectives for all people and places throughout the EU;
- H. whereas the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies offers methodological support at all levels;
- I. whereas micro-cohesion is a form of balance for underdeveloped areas within more developed regions; whereas, explicitly focusing on 'places and people', the Territorial Agenda (TA2030) pioneers the 'idea of interpersonal cohesion' alongside territorial cohesion, taking into account that these disparities can only be addressed by paying more attention to the diversity and potential of territories, as well as designing place-based policies and strategies, with the aim of better incorporating a territorial dimension

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

into all EU funds;

- J. whereas Article 28 CPR designates integrated territorial investments (ITIs) and community-led local development (CLLD) as the instruments for implementing territorial development strategies and calls for coherence and coordination among the funds when several are applied to the same strategy for regional or local development; whereas these instruments are aimed at bottom-up territorial development and reinforce the active participation of local stakeholders;
- K. whereas in the 2014-2020 period, 1 975 strategies were programmed among the then 28 Member States, financed with EUR 19 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), of which EUR 13.8 billion was allocated to ITIs in nine Member States;
- L. whereas CLLD was the second most used tool by Member States for developing territorial or local strategies in the 2014-2020 period and guarantees that local and regional governments and stakeholders will be closely involved in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of the EU funds they receive; whereas there is no earmarking for the use of CLLD in the 2021-2027 programming period;
- M. whereas the implementation of ITIs and CLLDs remains uneven across the EU and several Member States and managing authorities do not seem very committed to implementing them; whereas the interpretation and implementation of policy objective 5 'Europe closer to citizens' (PO5) differs among Member States, resulting in low ITI and CLLD implementation; whereas the co-legislators should consider, in the future, a more flexible implementation of PO5 without strict requirements on strategies and governance, helping to open it to all kinds of initiatives that contribute to regional and local development;
- N. whereas ITIs and CLLDs are instruments that should be aimed not only at facilitating a bottom-up approach to territorial development by involving local and regional governments from the start, but also by facilitating dialogue between the various stakeholders and by increasing cooperation among the public and private sector, as well as by fostering cooperation and the transfer of information among all levels of government;
- O. whereas the TA2030 invites Parliament and its Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible for economic, social and territorial cohesion, to take its objectives into account by advocating its priorities in EU legislative processes;
- P. whereas the ITI and place-based policies are necessary conditions to achieve EU strategic objectives such as the green and digital transitions; whereas place-based policies can help territories to escape from long-term economic decline and the 'regional development trap', in which a region is unable to retain its economic dynamics in terms of income, productivity and employment;
- Q. whereas the TA2030 defines two overarching objectives, a Just Europe and a Green Europe, which have six priorities (Balanced Europe, Functional Regions, Integration beyond borders, Healthy Environment, Circular Economy and Sustainable Connections) for developing the European territory as a whole along with all of its places; whereas the TA2030 further aligns EU territorial development objectives with the UN's 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal; whereas the European Urban Agenda, through the Leipzig Charter, supports the objectives of the TA2030;

- R. whereas strong common territorial development through the CPR and implementation of the TA2030 can serve as a vehicle for strengthening solidarity and democratic processes and for a fair and green EU; whereas territorial approaches add value by applying a strategic, spatial lens that captures the specific combinations of social, institutional, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities that influence the development of all types of territories;
  - S. whereas implementation of the TA2030 priorities remains uneven across the EU, in particular taking into consideration spatial disparities such as insularity; whereas the TA2030 conclusions show growing inequalities within the EU, which accentuate the gaps between people and between territories;
  - T. whereas the TA2030 calls for the territorial dimension of sectoral policies to be strengthened at all levels of governance; whereas the driving principles of the TA2030 are encompassed in the two priorities ‘People and places are drifting apart’ and ‘Sustainable development and climate change’;
  - U. whereas seven pilot actions were launched with the adoption of the TA2030, serving as an example of the application of its objectives on the ground, at local and regional level, and inspiring joint actions across the EU, namely: ‘A future for lagging regions’, ‘Understanding how sector policies shape spatial (im)balances’, ‘Small places matter’, ‘Cross-border spatial planning’, ‘Climate action in Alpine towns’, ‘Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition’, and ‘Reducing land artificialisation, urban sprawl and soil sealing in cities of different sizes and functional urban areas’;
  - V. whereas, taking into account the limited geographical balance in the development of these pilot actions and the administrative difficulties encountered when pilot actions were financed by several programmes, better data collection is needed, as well as a coherent revision of the TA2030;
1. Stresses that, in the 2014-2020 period, only 28 % of strategies for sustainable urban development were implemented through ITIs; calls on the Commission to take action to encourage the use of such tools to develop the TA2030, in particular through stepped-up communication activities;
  2. Stresses the valuable contribution to territorial development delivered by actions implemented through CLLD such as those under the LEADER programme; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce LEADER by increasing its budgetary envelope, by guaranteeing a high level of autonomy for the Local Action Groups regarding their constitution and their decision-making and reducing the administrative burden;
  3. Calls on the Commission to use the results of the upcoming 2024 evaluation report for the 2014-2020 programming period, as well as the results of actions delivered through CLLD such as those under the LEADER programme, to support programmes for the 2021-2027 period; notes the importance of the qualitative analysis of territorial

development tools; regrets, in this regard, the conclusion of the special report of the European Court of Auditors on LEADER and CLLD that their benefits are not sufficiently demonstrated;

4. Welcomes the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies and the Handbook of sustainable urban development strategies as guides for all administrative levels for the design, implementation and monitoring of territorial and local, including urban, development strategies; believes the dissemination of good practices should be fostered with a view to ensuring that projects are effective and sustainable; regrets, however, the belated publication of these handbooks and encourages the Commission to produce timely guidelines to simplify the process for developing the programmes; highlights the need to offer more guidance and greater flexibility to Member States on the implementation of PO5 'Europe closer to citizens', and the actions to achieve it, and to align them with those set out in the TA2030 and create incentives to allocate more funding to PO5;
5. Calls on the Member States to promote strategic spatial planning that takes into account territories as a whole beyond metropolitan, urban and functional urban areas; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to strengthen rural-urban links as a way of achieving better balanced territorial development across the EU and to consider cross-border planning and implementation through bottom-up approaches such as CLLD/ITI;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Council to earmark funding for rural areas and regions that suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps in the same way that 8 % of cohesion policy funds are earmarked for the development of programmes under the Urban Agenda; notes that these funds should be predominantly used via integrated territorial development tools;
7. Takes into account the capacities demonstrated by local and regional authorities in the implementation and management of territorial tools, and considers that a paradigm shift is necessary in the involvement of local and regional authorities in the planning, implementation and management of territorial tools; calls for an effective implementation of the partnership principle and in-depth consultation with local and regional authorities and other stakeholders prior to the definition of ITI and CLLD actions; highlights the importance of the bottom-up approach to territorial development, while empowering citizens to take ownership of the development of their territories;
8. Calls for territorial or local development strategies funded by more than one programme to be merged into a single track, in accordance with Article 28 CPR and with the Commission's support, where needed, in order to prevent delays and administrative obstacles; welcomes the possibility, introduced in the 2021-2027 programming period, to designate a lead fund for strategies funded by more than one fund;
9. Notes that territorial instruments, such as CLLDs and ITIs, are proven measures to bring the EU closer to citizens; notes that the data in the STRAT-Board for the 2014-2020 period shows that CLLDs played a major role in the development of territorial strategies, highlighting the strong interest at local level in actively participating in the development of these strategies; calls on the Member States and the Commission to simplify the administrative management of funds, especially cases where CLLDs draw from more than one fund; stresses that ITIs are the main tool used by Member States

with a larger allocation of ERDF funds, as they may quickly absorb the amounts and are able to cover several main axes present in one or several programmes;

10. Underlines the clear distinction between Member States that are committed to developing ITIs or CLLDs and those that are not; calls on the Commission to clarify this differentiation in order to avoid geographical disparities and to provide for tailored technical support for the Member States that have not made use of these territorial tools; encourages all Member States to make greater use of the integrated territorial development tools as defined in Article 28 CPR and to ensure respect for partnership as defined in Article 8 CPR; takes the view that integrated territorial development tools should be mandatory for Member States;
11. Welcomes the technical simplifications in territorial development introduced in the 2021-2027 programming period; calls, however, on the Commission and the Member States to keep the necessary additional administrative regulations to a strict minimum and to focus more on proportionality, since small projects currently have proportionally higher administrative burdens (for beneficiaries) and administrative costs (for programme authorities) than larger projects;
12. Considers the TA2030 to be a real and proper instrument that aims to reduce the spatial dimension of inequalities and to ensure the EU's cohesion through the management of each of its regions with their particularities; believes, therefore, that societies and territories should be more involved in acknowledging the importance of this Agenda; calls on the Commission to modify the role of the TA2030 beyond that of a territorial management guide;
13. Observes that the TA2030 not only advocates place-based policy responses to territorial challenges, but also provides a vision and ambition for the territorial cohesion objective through better involvement of local and regional authorities and citizens;
14. Highlights that although multi-funding is one of the main purposes of the territorial integrated tools, current findings show that the use of multi-funding may still prove difficult in some countries, especially since, in the current period, the EAFRD (rural development) is no longer included in the CPR and therefore additional and specific measures to align the rules of EAFRD and other cohesion policy funds would be needed (i.e. using different EU funds for integrated projects at the local level that address several policy objectives);
15. Calls on the Member States to actively promote gender mainstreaming in the preparation and implementation of the TA2030's pilot projects on the ground;
16. Stresses that a fair and dignified income and quality of life for citizens and their families in rural areas is essential to ensure social progress and successful territorial and local development; insists on the need to ensure decent working and living conditions and social protection for all;
17. Stresses the importance of improving policy coherence and implementing rural proofing of future EU integrated territorial development and other relevant initiatives to assess the coherence and complementarity of EU policies and their potential impact on rural areas, thus effectively preventing rural depopulation and facilitating generational renewal, equal access to high-quality essential services and job creation in rural areas;



- stresses the importance of the rural proofing mechanism also when Member States assess the impacts of proposed legislation in rural areas; underlines the importance of involving local and regional authorities in the definition and implementation of rural proofing mechanisms, as well as in their governance at both EU and national levels, to combat transport-related social exclusion and to improve the territorial accessibility of the areas concerned in order to improve cross-border and rural-urban cooperation, access to broadband internet and adequate services, particularly healthcare and education, as well as the diversification of the rural economy and the revitalisation of rural areas, increasing the attractiveness of these areas, as well as ensuring a sustainable future for these communities;
18. Stresses that TA2030 actions should play a central role in partnership agreements and programmes; points out that these actions should be more decisive in the allocation of funds and the need to promote the integration of the TA2030 into EU policies, with a focus on levels of governance closer to the ground; believes that the TA2030 should be provided with adequate funding and an allocation methodology in the future multiannual financial framework;
  19. Underlines as essential the inclusion of TA2030 priorities and objectives in the legislative instruments and programmes of the cohesion policy funds, which should be tailored to each territory; welcomes the TA2030 pilot actions that have been developed and calls on the Member States and the Commission to continue investing in these actions, improving their geographical balance and better coordinating them with the principles of the TA2030;
  20. Stresses the need to involve Parliament, in particular its competent Committee on Regional Development, in the pilot actions in order to ensure that they are in line with current EU priorities, and to promote the results of pilot actions and communicate them at EU level, integrating and coordinating them with initiatives such as cohesion policy, in particular the ERDF and Interreg;
  21. Calls for a strategy to facilitate synergies between different EU funds for projects implemented through territorial tools and for the administrative simplification of pilot actions financed by more than one fund in order to reduce the administrative barriers and facilitate applications for these projects;
  22. Believes that businesses could play an essential role in territorial development strategies; calls on the Commission to support arrangements for collaborations between companies and local and regional authorities with a view to developing territorial development projects that foster job creation and economic growth;
  23. Points out the huge potential of the TA2030 and its current and future pilot projects in addressing the highly diverse needs of non-urban areas, including rural areas, mountainous areas, islands and coastal areas, remote and sparsely populated areas and many other types of territories where a mix of urban and rural features coexist; highlights, in particular, the fact that rural areas are often confronted with demographic challenges, low population density and limited access to and quality of services of general interest, while not always having the capacity to design and implement innovative solutions, thus they can greatly benefit from the exchange of best practices;
  24. Stresses the need for greater dissemination of the actions and achievements of the pilot

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

25. Calls on the Member States to develop their territorial agendas in line with the TA2030 as a basis for programming their territorial strategies, taking into account the specificities and highly diverse needs of each of their regions, and serving as an incentive, as well as in order to stimulate the decision-making process and the design of territorial and urban policies; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to enable different territorial strategies for all EU regions including rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, regions that suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, such as the northernmost regions and regions with very low population densities, islands, cross-border regions and mountain regions;
26. Highlights that the good performance of governance structures can determine the optimal mix of investment priorities in order to achieve the necessary multilevel vertical and horizontal coordination to design and deliver integrated development strategies;
27. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote the implementation of the TA2030 beyond pilot actions, making this instrument a reference framework for action that provides concrete and adapted guidelines for EU territories to improve their performance; highlights the opportunity to link regional funding to the achievement of TA2030 priorities, and calls on the Commission to develop monitoring indicators linking the TA2030 and the use of cohesion policy funds, in particular the ERDF;
28. Reiterates the need to urgently strengthen EU policy regarding mitigation and adaptation to climate change, also in the light of the growing trend of extreme weather events in recent years and months in the EU; calls, therefore, on the public authorities to continue the fight against climate change; highlights, in this context, the need to step up the ambition and quality of the pilot projects within the objective ‘A Green Europe’ and its first priority ‘Healthy environment’; stresses that territorial development is key to building resilient regions and ensuring the sustainable implementation of cohesion policy funding;
29. Welcomes the European Economic and Social Committee’s proposal to promote a Europe-wide charter of rural/urban rights and responsibilities; is also convinced that more cooperation with urban areas is needed to ensure that no area or citizen is ‘left behind’ in the just transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable and prosperous European Union, striving for a rural and urban commitment to a fair approach and showing the added value of rural and urban organisations working together;
30. Underlines the necessity of ensuring a more balanced development of EU regions by guaranteeing better distribution of EU funds, including common agricultural policy support, within and among Member States; emphasises that it is impossible to achieve sustainable and long-term territorial development if support is allocated to different regions based on historical data;
31. Notes that more and more people are choosing to live in cities and work in rural areas; calls on the Commission to design programmes that take all territories into account, including metropolitan, urban and functional areas; encourages the Commission to

- design LEADER in such a way that it can be used by small cities;
32. Calls on the Commission to connect the experience gained in the implementation of the TA2030 with the future cohesion policy and the recommendations of the High-Level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy in order to overcome territorial imbalances and functional mismatches in a more effective way; points out the opportunity presented by the TA2030 as a tool for assessing the impact of cohesion policy with regard to the objective of territorial cohesion;
  33. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to carry out a coherent review of the TA2030 by the end of 2024, including a thorough review of its governance system, the progress made in its implementation and the relevance of its priorities, as outlined in the TA2030;
  34. Welcomes the binding character of the methodology described in the Handbook of territorial and local development strategies giving territorial policies the same prominence as urban policies;
  35. Calls for a single framework for strategies aimed at both urban and wider territorial development, treating territorial requirements as a whole; stresses that this could significantly reduce bureaucratic barriers in the acquisition of funds;
  36. Calls on the Commission to ensure the proper implementation of funds and the implementation of territorial instruments, favouring efficient management without disproportionate bureaucracy; underlines the need to simplify access to funds by identifying ‘one-stop shops’ for potential beneficiaries of EU cohesion fund ITI or CLLD projects, in particular to access information about the type of financing, administrative requirements and eligibility;
  37. Recognises the European Council’s role in the development of the territorial activities of the Member States; calls on the Member States to provide for sufficient human resources for both managing authorities and implementation bodies in charge of ITIs or CLLDs, in order to ensure technical support and advisory services specifically for Local Action Groups and ITI partners and to enable compliance with the regulations;
  38. Calls on the Commission to increase its involvement in territorial policy through cohesion policy and to strengthen the governance of regions in order to promote cohesion and micro-cohesion by covering the particularities of each region, improving decision-making at local and regional level and applying existing tools in order to improve the management of legislative instruments; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to continue to support cohesion policy funds in order to increase the resilience of territorial development, in particular to be able to cushion the effects of unexpected events, to protect regions from suffering the consequences and to uphold the principle of ‘do no harm to cohesion’;
  39. Is aware of the influence of EU Semester decisions on territorial cohesion and, consequently, on the capacity to develop territorial programmes; reiterates, therefore, the need to strengthen the territorial dimension of the European Semester and to improve the correlation between cohesion policy and European economic governance, involving local and regional authorities at all stages of the procedures linked to the European Semester and the country-specific recommendations;

40. Calls on the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to play a more active role in the follow-up and further development of the TA2030; calls on the Commission to conduct a study of each region's capacity to cushion future global challenges affecting territorial cohesion; notes that this would provide a rapid response tool that would allow for flexibility in the allocation or reinforcement of resources, according to the real-time situation of the EU's regions;
41. Highlights the relevance of the territorial tools in terms of increased and inclusive participation of civil society and local and regional governments; calls on the Commission to explore new ways of raising further awareness on their rationale and of substantially increasing the use of ITIs and CLLDs, also by potentially earmarking a percentage to be used in the post-2027 cohesion policy framework;
42. Calls on the European Investment Bank to increase the financial allocation envisaged for cohesion policy funds dedicated to safeguarding the balance and proper functioning of regions;
43. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the implementation of territorial development (CPR, Title III, Chapter II) and its application in the European Territorial agenda 2030 (2023/2048(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Asim Ademov

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Union must aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions, paying particular attention to rural areas, which face the urgent challenges of demographic decline and ageing, especially affecting EU farming populations, along with rural abandonment, lack of or poor access to public and private infrastructure and services, including in particular high-speed broadband connections, digital infrastructure, mobility, healthcare and social services, and education and training, as well as low incomes and fewer job opportunities and the rising costs of running a farm;
- B. whereas women play a crucial role in rural development and in the social fabric of rural areas, maintaining and improving rural livelihoods and strengthening rural communities, and must be regarded as drivers of sustainable development; whereas the significant contribution that women make to local and rural development is not sufficiently reflected in their participation in the corresponding decision-making processes, given that women in rural areas are often under-represented in decision-making bodies;
- C. whereas the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis and Russia's military aggression against Ukraine have contributed to exacerbate important difficulties in the proper functioning of the entire agri-food chain, which is one of the main drivers of rural development; whereas rising energy prices and inflation across Europe are hitting rural areas particularly hard, especially regions with geographical specificities and the outermost regions, where it is most difficult to achieve cohesion policy objectives;
- D. whereas the digital and green transitions, if they are implemented fairly and do not leave anyone behind, offer opportunities for stronger, connected, resilient, innovative and prosperous rural areas in the long term; whereas an up-to-date digital infrastructure is a precondition for digital and smart farming solutions and hence the success of the green transition, as well as a key enabler of competitive small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) in rural areas; whereas SMEs play a particularly important role in rural areas as employers, as facilitators of the diversification of farm income and as sponsors of social and cultural life, and therefore help to make rural areas more attractive to young people; whereas, however, despite recent improvements in high-speed broadband connectivity, only 59 % of households in rural regions have access to broadband, compared to 87 % of the households in the EU;

- E. whereas the European Territorial Agenda 2030 calls for the territorial dimension of sectoral policies to be strengthened at all governance levels;
  - F. whereas it appears that in regions and administrative units where LEADER is implemented, a mandatory Local Action Group (LAG) manager helps improve the performance and absorption of regional funding and development; whereas cohesion policy gives preference to urban areas; whereas, furthermore, many investments in rural areas not directly related to agriculture, such as the construction of public roads, investments in sewage systems, setting up non-agricultural businesses, etc., are largely financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and not by the Cohesion Fund;
  - G. whereas rural areas should be attractive places to do business and play a key role in ensuring EU food security; whereas the long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas<sup>1</sup> aims to improve rural quality of life, achieve balanced territorial development and stimulate economic growth in rural areas; whereas the role and importance of rural areas is often under-appreciated, insufficiently rewarded and funded;
  - H. whereas the diversity of the EU's rural areas calls for locally designed responses and solutions corresponding to each territory's specific needs and possibilities, and strategies should address rural areas according to their individual characteristics and in relation to their environment, using, among other tools, the rural proofing mechanism;
  - I. whereas rural communities are exposed to greater damage from climate change, more frequent adverse climate events such as storms, floods and droughts, and the consequences of biodiversity loss, and experience greater costs associated with climate transition;
  - J. whereas sustainable farming and forestry management, which includes environmental, economic and social sustainability, provides decent work and livelihoods, protects ecological systems and biodiversity, and also enhances climate and risk resilience;
1. Recalls that small, medium-sized and family farms play a special role in the EU agricultural system and are essential to ensuring food security and ecosystem services for European citizens; stresses that small, medium-sized and family farms and SMEs have a positive impact on social cohesion in these areas, providing employment opportunities and helping to maintain local populations;
  2. Stresses that a fair and dignified income and quality of life for citizens and their families in rural areas is essential to ensure social progress and successful territorial and local

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<sup>1</sup> Commission communication of 30 June 2021 entitled 'A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040' (COM(2021)0345).

development; insists on the need to ensure decent working and living conditions and social protection, in particular for young farm workers and migrant workers in the EU regions;

3. Stresses the importance of improving policy coherence and implementing a rural proofing of future EU integrated territorial development and other relevant initiatives to assess the coherence and complementarity of EU policies and their potential impact on rural areas, thus effectively preventing rural depopulation and facilitating generational renewal, equal access to high-quality essential services and job creation in rural areas; stresses the importance of the rural proofing mechanism also when Member States assess the impacts of proposed legislation in rural areas; underlines the importance of involving local and regional authorities in the definition and implementation of rural proofing mechanisms, as well as in their governance at both European and national levels, to combat transport-related social exclusion and to improve the territorial accessibility of the areas concerned in order to improve cross-border and rural-urban cooperation, access to broadband internet and adequate services, particularly health and education, as well as the diversification of the rural economy and the revitalisation of rural areas, increasing the attractiveness of these areas, as well as ensuring a sustainable future for these communities;
4. Welcomes the European Economic and Social Committee's proposal to promote a Europe-wide Charter of rural/urban rights and responsibilities; is also convinced that more cooperation with urban areas is needed to ensure that no area or citizen is 'left behind' in the just transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable and prosperous European Union, striving for a rural and urban commitment to a fair approach and showing the added value of rural and urban organisations working together;
5. Welcomes the acceleration of the digital transformation in the agricultural sector and rural areas; draws attention to the exclusion of small farms and the outermost regions from these developments, and points to the need to take measures to ensure that the digital transformation also benefits all; notes in particular that a need exists to manage the risks of dependency and over-indebtedness for small farmers;
6. Emphasises that achieving the objectives of the cohesion policy in rural areas should always involve a compromise between environmental, economic and social objectives, which are vital for the well-being of current and future generations;
7. Reiterates the need for full integration of the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas in the current and future multiannual financial framework and common agricultural policy (CAP), ensuring adequate funding, without prejudice to other CAP budget headings, in order to ensure complementary and coherent support for rural areas at all levels of territorial development; underlines the need to ensure heightened cooperation between local, national and European authorities when developing and implementing agricultural policy in such a way as to take into account the diversity of Europe's rural areas, as well as the disparities between the levels of their development;
8. Calls for the inclusion of Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA2030) objectives in the legislative instruments and operational programmes of the cohesion policy funds; welcomes the TA2030 pilot actions that have been developed and calls on the Member States and the

Commission to continue investing in these actions and to coordinate them with initiatives linked to cohesion policy and rural development;

9. Underlines the necessity to ensure a more balanced development of EU regions by ensuring better distribution of EU funds, including CAP support within and between Member States; emphasises that it is impossible to achieve sustainable and long-term territorial development if support is allocated to different regions based on historical data;
10. Highlights the role that agriculture plays in achieving the Union objectives of food security, sustainable growth, social inclusion and combating climate change, while helping to diversify agricultural production, preserve biodiversity and develop local economies;
11. Calls on the Commission to provide the TA2030 with direct implementation instruments;
12. Underlines the potential of the LEADER community-led local development method (CLLD)<sup>2</sup> to engage rural communities in local action groups for the preparation and implementation of targeted local development strategies, to keep and restore living and thriving local rural economies, and the need to keep a sufficient level of funding for LEADER; calls on the Member States to make full use of LEADER's capacities in terms of developing solutions to address economic, social and development challenges in rural areas across the EU; calls on the Member States to support CLLD, including LEADER, encouraging participation in LAGs and ensuring their effective autonomy in terms of composition and decision-making; considers that further development of the development method and CLLD funding tools would contribute to stronger integrated strategies and more sustainable, resilient territorial development; stresses, in this regard, the need for a meaningful earmarking of assistance for CLLD under all relevant funds at EU level, similar to that in the EAFRD;
13. Calls on the Commission to use the results of the 2024 evaluation report for the 2014-2020 programming period, as well as the results and experiences of implementing EAFRD LEADER to support programmes for the period 2021-2027; calls on the Commission, when preparing the new programming period, to consider the possibility of providing financing measures in the LEADER programme that would encourage the renewal of generations in rural areas;
14. Stresses nonetheless that the Commission should continuously evaluate the costs and benefits of LEADER in order to ensure that the risk associated with the potential misuse of distributed funds is reduced to a minimum, while ensuring that the programme effectively facilitates local engagement and that the administrative requirements must match the size and structure of the local community to ensure that they do not create avoidable obstacles for new initiatives;
15. Calls on the Commission to improve the close cooperation and integrated use between EU funding instruments such as the Cohesion Funds, the EAFRD, the CAP and the NextGenerationEU recovery instrument, as well as with national instruments, in order

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained\\_en.html](https://ec.europa.eu/enrd/leader-clld/leader-toolkit/leaderclld-explained_en.html).



to deliver local development strategies and to maximise the impact and efficiency of investments in rural development; points to the importance of facilitating and promoting the use of multi-fund approaches to support the implementation of integrated projects for inclusive and sustainable rural development;

16. Calls on the Member States to make effective use of the various funding opportunities, also with a view to improving the prospects of SMEs, given their major role in generating employment in rural areas, and calls on the Commission to monitor and assess whether its support reaches rural areas and benefits their communities; calls for the development of partnerships in all economic activities in rural areas, between businesses of all sectors, local authorities, researchers and services based on innovation, knowledge sharing and cooperation;
17. Notes that the instability in the agricultural markets in the EU and across the world caused by Russia's aggression in Ukraine is a particular challenge for the cohesion policy and for European solidarity, as it is destabilising the farming sector and increasing the risk of widespread economic stagflation, which will further exacerbate the current wealth disparities between the various countries and regions of the EU;
18. Emphasises the role of e-services, mobile service solutions, private-public partnerships, social enterprises, the cultural and creative industries, the accessibility of education and healthcare; as well as cooperatives, to help provide the necessary services for rural areas and act as a key factor for rural socio-economic development;
19. Draws attention to the need to also factor into the equation the development of other economic sectors, such as agri-tourism and cultural tourism, in rural regions in Europe, in order to revitalise rural areas;
20. Calls for the improvement of affordable public transport services and infrastructure such as railways, roads and charging and refuelling stations in rural areas to support e-mobility solutions in order to fight the digital and transport divide between urban and rural areas; highlights, therefore, that it is essential to provide the necessary funding for the development and maintenance of transport links, as this could encourage the older generation to stay longer in agriculture and attract young people from regional centres to work in rural areas;
21. Draws attention to the continuing conflict of interest in some rural and suburban areas between the financing of cohesion policy and agricultural policy objectives, and calls on the Commission to make an appropriate distinction, in line with the Treaty, between funding for rural areas under the CAP and under the cohesion policy, taking into account the objectives of each of these policies as laid down in Articles 39 and 174 of the Treaty;
22. Calls for the improvement of the level of digital skills and the availability and affordability of adequate digital infrastructure, and the capacities to effectively deploy digital technologies, such as digital service platforms, in rural areas;
23. Stresses that women in rural areas can be agents of change in moving towards the objectives of the TA2030, contributing to a just and green Europe that offers future prospects, protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition to sustainable

agriculture; points out the importance of creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs in rural areas, including legal and policy aspects, to ensure better access to information, knowledge and skills, as well as to facilitate access to financial resources and thereby create more jobs in rural areas; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take action to develop and implement measures to combat gender inequality; recalls that in the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy Framework, gender equality and a gender perspective must be included and promoted throughout all stages of the process to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate cohesion programmes;

24. Is convinced that the continuing lack of internal and external alignment as regards direct CAP payments is undermining the cohesion policy's long-term objectives, especially in the poorest and least developed areas;
25. Reiterates the need to urgently strengthen EU policy regarding mitigation and adaptation to climate change, also in the light of the growing trends of extreme weather events in the last few years and months in the EU; highlights, in this context, the need to step up the level of ambition and quantity of the present and future pilot projects within the objective 'Greener Europe' and its first priority 'Healthier environment';
26. Calls for greater effort in enabling rural residents to take part actively in policy and decision-making processes, involving a broad range of stakeholders at all levels of governance in order to develop tailor-made, place-based and integrated policy solutions and investments;
27. Notes that more and more people are choosing to live in cities and work in rural areas; calls on the Commission to design programmes which take all territories into account, including metropolitan, urban and functional areas; encourages the Commission to design LEADER in such way that it can be used by small cities;
28. Emphasises the essential economic role played by agriculture, forestry and fisheries; calls for the further development of the short supply chains, quality schemes, producer organisations and cooperatives which contribute to increasing the sustainability of European food production;
29. Emphasises that generational renewal is the key to the social, economic and environmental sustainability of rural areas and EU food autonomy and the future of agriculture, and must therefore remain a high priority in territorial development plans and strategies; stresses the need to account for the needs of small and medium-sized farm holdings, and to focus on attracting young farmers in particular, preventing land abandonment and facilitating land access and access to credit;
30. Stresses the significance of circular and bio-economy principles, as well as their application within the agricultural sector, in contributing to the realisation of the objectives set out in the European Green Deal; encourages the enhancement of the understanding and implementation of circular and bio-economy principles within the European agriculture and food system.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS  
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR FOR THE OPINION HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur, Asim Ademov, in his capacity as rapporteur declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	16.11.2023
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 35 -: 0 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Mazaly Aguilar, Clara Aguilera, Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Benoît Biteau, Franc Bogovič, Daniel Buda, Isabel Carvalhais, Asger Christensen, Dacian Cioloș, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Luke Ming Flanagan, Dino Giarrusso, Martin Häusling, Martin Hlaváček, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Jarosław Kalinowski, Camilla Laureti, Gilles Lebreton, Norbert Lins, Marlene Mortler, Juozas Olekas, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Sarah Wiener
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Asim Ademov, Ladislav Ilčić, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu
<b>Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote</b>	Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Lydie Massard, Ville Niinistö

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

35	+
ECR	Mazaly Aguilar, Ladislav Ilčić, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Bert-Jan Ruissen
ID	Gilles Lebreton
NI	Dino Giarrusso
PPE	Asim Ademov, Franc Bogovič, Daniel Buda, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Jarosław Kalinowski, Norbert Lins, Marlene Mortler, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa
Renew	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Asger Christensen, Dacian Cioloș, Jérémy Decerle, Martin Hlaváček
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Adrian-Draagoș Benea, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Camilla Laureti, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Juozas Olekas
The Left	Luke Ming Flanagan
Verts/ALE	Benoît Biteau, Martin Häusling, Lydie Massard, Ville Niinistö, Sarah Wiener

0	-

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

<b>Date adopted</b>	30.11.2023
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 26 -: 0 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	François Alfonsi, Pascal Arimont, Isabel Benjumea Benjumea, Tom Berendsen, Stéphane Bijoux, Vlad-Marius Botoș, Andrea Cozzolino, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Nora Mebarek, Alin Mituța, Andželika Anna Mozdżanowska, Niklas Nienaß, Andrey Novakov, Younous Omarjee, Witold Pahl, Wolfram Pirchner, Caroline Roose, Marcos Ros Sempere, André Rougé, Susana Solís Pérez
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Daniel Buda, Isabel Carvalhais, Katalin Cseh, Mónica Silvana González, Elena Lizzi, Denis Nesci, Bronis Ropè
<b>Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote</b>	Francisco Guerreiro

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

26	+
ECR	Andželika Anna Mozdżanowska, Denis Nesci
NI	Andrea Cozzolino
PPE	Pascal Arimont, Isabel Benjumea Benjumea, Tom Berendsen, Daniel Buda, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Andrey Novakov, Witold Pahl, Wolfram Pirchner
Renew	Stéphane Bijoux, Vlad-Marius Botoş, Katalin Cseh, Alin Mituţa, Susana Solis Pérez
S&D	Isabel Carvalhais, Mónica Silvana González, Nora Mebarek, Marcos Ros Sempere
The Left	Younous Omarjee
Verts/ALE	François Alfonsi, Francisco Guerreiro, Niklas Nienaß, Caroline Roose, Bronis Ropè

0	-

2	0
ID	Elena Lizzi, André Rougé

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention