**Follow up to the European Parliament non-legislative resolution on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change**

1. **Rapporteur:** Tonino PICULA (S&D / HR)
2. **Reference numbers:** 2020/2074 (INI) / B9-0034/2021 / P9\_TA-PROV(2021)0097
3. **Date of adoption of the resolution:** 25 March 2021
4. **Competent Parliamentary Committee:** Committee on Regional Development (REGI)
5. **Brief analysis/ assessment of the resolution and requests made in it:**

The European Parliament’s resolution underlines the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union’s commitments undertaken under the European Green Deal, taking into consideration social, economic and territorial aspects to ensure a just transition (paragraph 1).

The European Parliament believes that regional environment strategies should boost cooperation between the regions, also through cross-border projects, and calls on the Commission to provide support and facilitate cooperation between regions and the exchange of expertise and best practices (paragraph 13).

The European Parliament calls on the Commission to monitor and publish reports about the progress of national governments and local and regional authorities in addressing climate change (paragraph 22).

The European Parliament highlights the need to ensure a functional transition from the 2014-2020 to the 2021-2027 programming periods. It calls on the Commission, in this regard, to produce user-friendly guidelines to give regional and local governments the opportunity to acknowledge and capitalise on consolidated best practices on energy transition and the decarbonisation of economies (paragraph 32).

The European Parliament invites the Commission to benchmark draft-spending plans against highest possible climate ambition (paragraph 43). It also stresses the importance of the proposal set out by the Commission in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 for cities to prepare urban greening plans (paragraph 44).

1. **Response to the requests and overview of the action taken, or intended to be taken, by the Commission:**

On paragraph 13, the Commission shares the European Parliament’s view that cooperation between regions and the exchange of expertise and best practices is an important element in advancing the transition to a climate-neutral EU. In this regard, the Commission already strives to facilitate such cooperation. Notably, the Energy and Managing Authorities (EMA) network serves as an informal platform to exchange information, share good practices, experiences and the latest implementation and policy developments. It aims at supporting Managing Authorities to make the best possible use of cohesion policy funds to advance with the energy transition. Additionally, the European Network of Environmental Authorities - Managing Authorities (ENEA-MA) provides a forum for the exchange of the experience among Environmental Authorities and Managing Authorities in integrating environmental aspects into cohesion policy programmes and projects. The Commission has also set up a Just Transition Platform to assist EU countries and regions to unlock the support available

through the Just Transition Mechanism, by providing access to knowledge, offering technical and advisory support as well as facilitating exchange of information and good practices.

The Commission contributes to the preparation and the implementation of the EU macro-regional strategies and the Interreg programmes, which are two key EU cohesion policy tools for strengthening territorial cooperation between the Member States and also between them and non-EU countries. The EU macro-regional strategies have proved to be an important platform for coordination and cooperation in the field of climate action and, as stated in the third report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies (COM(2020) 578 final), are highly relevant in delivering the EU priorities for 2019-2024 in their respective territories, in particular the European Green Deal. Moreover, the Interreg programmes, covering cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation, provide a framework for joint action, in order to find common solutions to shared challenges, such as the fight against climate change. They promote exchanges of experience, and facilitate acting together. As in the past, also in the programming period 2021-2027 Interreg will continue to put a strong emphasis on supporting the achievement of the climate objectives and the transition towards a greener, climate neutral and resilient Europe.

The European Covenant[[1]](#footnote-1) of Mayors for Climate & Energy is a resource for local climate and energy actions. The European Climate Adaptation Platform Climate-ADAPT[[2]](#footnote-2) aims to support Europe in adapting to climate change by helping users to access and share data and information. The European Climate Pact[[3]](#footnote-3), which is an initiative of the European Green Deal, is an opportunity for people, communities and organisations to participate in climate action across Europe.

On paragraph 22, concerning monitoring, cohesion policy has one of the most robust systems of objective setting, monitoring and [evaluation](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/regiokm/display/BR2019/2.8.2.%2BEvaluations%2C%2Bimpact%2Band%2Bperformance). For the 2014-2020 period, the Commission developed the ESIF Open Data [platform](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/). The platform dynamically presents progress on financial inputs and achievements for each of 530 ESI Fund programmes, by Member State, by theme and by fund. The platform provides the reference tool for all financial inputs and physical achievements. This allows tracking progress, benchmark and compare financial and progress with outputs. The platform provides dedicated [data stories](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/datastories) on the cohesion policy support to [climate objectives](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Tracking-climate-related-investments/a8jn-38y8), [risk prevention measures](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-preventing-risks/j9ce-3mtn), [clean energy transition](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-supporting-the-Energy-Union/eczs-gij5), [protecting nature and biodiversity](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Cohesion-policy-protecting-nature-and-biodiversity/gznm-sv2i), [waste management](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/In-profile-EU-support-to-waste-management/xqec-t5kv), [air quality](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Tracking-cohesion-policy-air-quality-investments/7ddu-4fki), [clean urban transport](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/In-profile-EU-support-to-clean-urban-transport/mgkf-h7hj), etc. The Commission intends to continue this work and extend the platform to the programmes of the period 2021-2027.

The Member States are reporting under Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/1208. The European Climate Law will amend certain of the provisions on reporting. Information at Member State level is available on [Climate-ADAPT](https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/).

On paragraph 32, to achieve the European Green Deal objectives, Europe need to engage in ‘sustainability transitions’, which involve a profound transformation of societal systems towards more sustainable modes. The European Commission published a [toolkit](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guidelines/2020/supporting-sustainability-transitions-under-the-european-green-deal-with-cohesion-policy-toolkit-for-national-and-regional-decision-makers) on sustainability transitions to help national and regional authorities implement necessary systemic changes through cohesion policy. It contains good practice principles to promote sustainability transitions in the planning and delivery of Partnership Agreements and Programmes for the 2021-2027 funding period. It also offers advice on project selection criteria and other tools to mainstream sustainability in programmes. The toolkit is accompanied by a [report](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/report_sust_transit_en.pdf) with additional case studies, inspiring examples and more information.

The Commission recognised the outermost regions’ clean energy potential in its communication on a strategic partnership with the EU's outermost regions (COM(2017) 623 final) and committed to mainstreaming their good practices in this context through the Clean Energy for EU Islands initiative. The Commission has further committed to paying particular attention to these regions in the European Green Deal communication (COM/2019/640 final), taking into account their renewable energy sources. In its Circular economy action plan (COM(2020)98 final), the Commission committed to tailoring circular economy solutions to the outermost regions and islands. In its offshore renewable energy strategy (COM(2020)741 final) it identifies the outermost regions as pioneers in decarbonising islands.

The outermost regions and islands can use a range of EU instruments to support transition towards clean energy including the European Regional development Fund, the LIFE programme, and the NESOI (New Energy Solutions Optimised for Island) project for technical assistance in shaping energy projects.

On paragraph 43, as regards investments in climate action, at least 30% of the European Regional Development Fund and 37% of the Cohesion Fund investments will contribute to climate objectives. To guide and mobilise investments, the Commission proposed a dedicated objective for a greener and low-carbon Europe. The Commission will monitor all the programmes against these targets using EU Coefficient, based on the original OECD Rio markers. This system was introduced already for the 2014-2020 period in order to track cohesion policy contribution to the 20% headline target set for the MFF 2014-2020. The methodology has been further enhanced for the 2021-2027 period, ensuring consistency between programmes and shifting towards an “effect-based” methodology that also includes relevant elements of the Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance. The achievement of this target is monitored with the help of ESIF Open Data platform [climate tracking tool](https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/Tracking-climate-related-investments/a8jn-38y8).

On paragraph 44, concerning biodiversity, cohesion policy provides investment support to the Member States’ in biodiversity, nature and green infrastructure. Indeed, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 calls on European cities to develop Urban Greening Plans (including. measures to create urban forests, parks, gardens, etc.). The Commission shares the European Parliament’s views as regards the importance of such plans. These could contribute to the reflections on sustainable transition as part of the integrated sustainable urban development plans to be programmed and implemented by the Member States under cohesion policy programmes. Furthermore, investments in green infrastructure in cities and neighbourhoods also contribute to overall integration of nature-based solutions across different cohesion policy investments.

1. <https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/about> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://europa.eu/climate-pact/index_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)