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*Plenary sitting*

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**A9-0325/2023**

31.10.2023

# REPORT

on harnessing talent in Europe's regions  
(2023/2044(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT .....	26
LETTER OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS.....	28
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT	32
INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....	40
FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE .....	41

## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on harnessing talent in Europe's regions (2023/2044(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission communication of 17 January 2023 entitled ‘Harnessing talent in Europe’s regions’ (COM(2023)0032),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights,
- having regard to the European Committee of the Regions study entitled ‘Addressing brain drain: The local and regional dimension’, published in 2018,
- having regard to the study entitled ‘Brain Drain in the EU: Local and Regional Public Policies and Good Practices’ of 27 February 2020, published in the *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020)0625),
- having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 14 October 2020 entitled ‘Demographic change: proposals on measuring and tackling its negative effects in the EU regions’<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013<sup>5</sup>,

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

<sup>2</sup> Boc, E., ‘Brain Drain in the EU: Local and Regional Public Policies and Good Practices’, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, No 59, 2020, pp. 23-29.

<sup>3</sup> [OJ C 316, 6.8.2021, p. 2.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [OJ C 440, 18.12.2020, p. 33.](#)

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 189, 28.5.2021, p. 1.

- 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>6</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>7</sup>,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013<sup>8</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>9</sup>,
- 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>10</sup> (Common Provisions Regulation),
- 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),
- having regard to the Commission report of 9 February 2022 entitled ‘Cohesion in Europe towards 2050 – Eighth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion’<sup>11</sup>,
- having regard to Decision (EU) 2023/936 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 on a European Year of Skills<sup>12</sup>,
- having regard to the European Committee of the Regions study entitled ‘Rural proofing – a foresight framework for resilient rural communities’, published in 2022,
- having regard to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report of 22 June 2022 entitled ‘Making the most of public investments to address regional inequalities, megatrends and future shocks’<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>6</sup> [OJ L 231 30.6.2021, p. 60.](#)

<sup>7</sup> OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> OJ L 231 30.6.2021, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> OJ L 231 30.6.2021, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> [OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.](#)

<sup>11</sup> European Commission, ‘Cohesion in Europe towards 2050 – Eighth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion’, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 9 February 2022.

<sup>12</sup> OJ L 125, 11.5.2023, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> OECD, ‘Making the most of public investment to address regional inequalities, megatrends and future shocks’, *OECD Regional Development Papers*, No 29, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2022.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 July 2022 entitled ‘A New European Innovation Agenda’ (COM(2022)0332),
- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report<sup>14</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2021 entitled ‘Towards a stronger partnership with the EU outermost regions’<sup>15</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2023 on the assessment of the new Commission communication on outermost regions<sup>16</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on EU border regions: living labs of European integration<sup>17</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 June 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on quality traineeships in the Union<sup>18</sup>,
- having regard to the ‘At a Glance’ briefing entitled ‘Question time: tackling depopulation through cohesion policy instruments, published by its Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services on 30 September 2022’<sup>19</sup>,
- having regard to the study entitled ‘The EU legal migration package: Towards a rights-based approach to attracting skills and talent to the EU’, published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies on 1 December 2022<sup>20</sup>,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability<sup>21</sup>,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 16 June 2022 on individual learning accounts<sup>22</sup>,
- having regard to the briefing paper of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training and the Lifelong Learning Platform entitled ‘Implementing a holistic approach to lifelong learning: Community Lifelong Learning Centres as a gateway to multidisciplinary support teams’, published in 2019,

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<sup>14</sup> [OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 100.](#)

<sup>15</sup> OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2023)0228.

<sup>17</sup> [OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 114.](#)

<sup>18</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2023)0239.

<sup>19</sup> At a Glance – ‘Question time: tackling depopulation through cohesion policy instruments’, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services, Members’ Research Service, 30 September 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Study – ‘Towards a rights-based approach to attracting skills and talent to the EU’, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C – Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 1 December 2022.

<sup>21</sup> OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> OJ C 243, 27.6.2022, p. 26.

- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 17 January 2023 entitled ‘The impact of demographic change – in a changing environment’ (SWD(2023)0021),
  - having regard to the OECD report of 14 March 2023 entitled ‘Job creation and local economic development 2023 – Bridging the Great Green Divide’<sup>23</sup>,
  - having regard to the working paper entitled ‘The geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap’, published by the Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy in March 2023<sup>24</sup>,
  - having regard to the resolution of the European Committee of the Regions of 16 March 2023 on harnessing talent in Europe’s regions<sup>25</sup>,
  - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 14 June 2023 on the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Harnessing talent in EU regions<sup>26</sup>,
  - having regard to the OECD report of 5 July 2023 entitled ‘Rethinking Regional Attractiveness in the New Global Environment’<sup>27</sup>,
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development,
  - having regard to the letter from the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A9-0325/2023),
- A. whereas the EU’s population has grown steadily over the last 50 years, increasing by 92.3 million people from 354.5 million in 1960, to 446.8 million in 2022; whereas population growth has slowed in recent decades, halting during the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas current predictions point to growth at a limited rate until 2029, at which date population growth will begin to slow down<sup>28</sup>; whereas the population in the EU is ageing and birth rates have been declining since the 1960s;
- B. whereas, according to Eurostat data, 46 EU regions, representing 16 % of the EU population, are currently in a talent development trap; whereas another 36 EU regions are at risk of falling into a talent development trap; whereas regions in a talent development trap face an accelerating decline in their working-age population, and a

<sup>23</sup> OECD, *Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2023: Bridging the Great Green Divide*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Working paper – ‘The geography of EU discontent and the regional development trap’, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023.

<sup>25</sup> [OJ C 188, 30.5.2023, p. 1.](#)

<sup>26</sup> OJ C 293, 18.8.2023, p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> OECD, *Rethinking Regional Attractiveness in the New Global Environment*, OECD Regional Development Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> SWD(2023)0021.

low and stagnant number of people with a tertiary education; whereas most of these regions are less developed;

- C. whereas the latest statistics indicate that the overall EU population will decrease from 446.8 million in 2022 to 419.5 million in 2100; whereas it is estimated that the average age of the EU population will increase by 5.8 years over the same period; whereas this will lead to a shrinking working-age population in the EU, with a loss of an additional 35 million people by 2050 and a significant reduction in the proportion of people active in the labour market<sup>29</sup>; whereas this process will trigger new and growing territorial disparities;
- D. whereas demographic changes vary significantly among regions, with some Member States facing a projected decline in their population in the coming seven years and others expecting projected population growth over the same period; whereas such demographic changes also take place between regions, generally translating to exoduses from rural to urban areas within Member States;
- E. whereas population loss is a sustained trend over time, particularly affecting rural areas with older populations on average than those found in cities and suburbs<sup>30</sup>; whereas young people are on average more likely to leave rural areas and less-developed regions, due to the lack of paid traineeships, career prospects and quality jobs, actively contributing to the phenomenon of rural exodus; whereas statistics indicate that the elderly in the EU-27 are generally more inclined than young people to live in predominantly rural and intermediate regions; whereas, according to estimates, one in three people living in rural areas will be aged 65 or over by 2050<sup>31</sup>;
- F. whereas the loss of population in rural areas and other territories listed under Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)<sup>32</sup> is deeply linked to a lack of investments, infrastructure, connectivity, nearby and accessible essential public services, training opportunities, quality educational, social and cultural facilities, and attractive and high-quality employment opportunities; whereas adapting rural infrastructure, investing in public transport, medical services and education services, and developing digital infrastructure in rural areas are important to make these regions more attractive; whereas the posting of young workers poses significant challenges to demographics and the overall quality of life of EU citizens, including through low generational renewal, ageing communities and overall population decline; whereas, however, particular emphasis must also be placed on programmes for the active involvement of older people in community life;
- G. whereas Article 174 TFEU states that the EU must aim to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the various regions, paying particular attention to certain regions, notably rural areas;

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<sup>29</sup> Eurostat, '[Population projections in the EU](#)', accessed 27 October 2023.

<sup>30</sup> SWD(2023)0021.

<sup>31</sup> Eurostat, '[Ageing Europe – statistics on population developments](#)', accessed 27 October 2023.

<sup>32</sup> 'Among the regions concerned, particular attention shall be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions'.

- H. whereas in spite of its temporary impact on the labour market, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a fragmented landscape of teleworking opportunities from which not all workers are able to benefit; whereas, however, such teleworking opportunities offer great potential to connect jobs from urban centres to smaller cities, suburbs and towns<sup>33</sup>; whereas, in order to boost this trend, it is necessary to improve connectivity in areas with low coverage, including rural areas, and to provide necessary infrastructure to enable internet access in ‘white areas’; whereas opportunities emerging as a result of the green and digital transitions have brought renewed attention to non-urban areas, and have opened up new job opportunities;
- I. whereas the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was highly varied across populations, as the elderly, people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those living in regions lacking connectivity were further left behind<sup>34, 35, 36</sup>;
- J. whereas the EU labour market faces a shortage of workers with skills adapted to the new socioeconomic realities, as well as to the green and digital transitions; whereas enabling workers with or without tertiary education to migrate to and integrate in Member States and their regions with the highest population loss represents one of the solutions to address the challenges facing these places; whereas the success of action plans on migrants’ integration and inclusion depends on the involvement of local and regional authorities and civil society organisations; whereas further improvement is required across the EU concerning the recognition of qualifications and prior learning;
- K. whereas the European Labour Authority, in its report entitled ‘Report on labour shortages and surpluses’, and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, in its report entitled ‘Cybersecurity skills development in the EU’, identified 28 occupations as having skills shortages in 2021, including in the healthcare, hospitality, construction and service sectors, and identified shortages of IT and security specialists, in particular cybersecurity experts, as well as workers with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM);
- L. whereas regions in, or at risk of, a talent development trap are characterised by a sharp decline in the working-age population, a low and stagnating share of people with tertiary education, a significant number of departing young people, a lack of economic dynamism and economic diversification and low innovation capacity; whereas these regions have significantly higher rates of youth unemployment and of people unemployed or not in education or training (NEETs) compared to the EU average; whereas, in these regions, wages, income and economic development are substantially lower than in the rest of the EU; whereas labour shortages are the consequence of unattractive salaries and poor working conditions in some sectors; whereas in this regard, a clear strategy for continuous employee training and skills development during worktime is needed;

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<sup>33</sup> See the Council conclusions of 14 June 2021 on telework.

<sup>34</sup> Di Pietro, G. et al., ‘[The likely impact of COVID-19 on education: Reflections based on the existing literature and recent international datasets](#)’, *JRC Technical Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020.

<sup>35</sup> West, M., ‘[An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19](#)’, UNESCO, Paris, 2023.

<sup>36</sup> European Parliament resolution of 12 July 2023 on the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learned and recommendations for the future (Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2023)0282).



- M. whereas brain drain is closely related to the need to improve working and living conditions, job opportunities, wages, equal opportunities, the availability of essential services such as transportation, connectivity, healthcare and education, including early education and care, the trust in institutions of people living in regions with low incomes across sectors and positions, social gaps and other socioeconomic disparities; whereas reducing such disparities is a commitment that has been reiterated through the European Pillar of Social Rights, but is far from being implemented; whereas fostering talent demand, supply and retention are inherently linked and must be assessed from a quality of life perspective;
- N. whereas, considering their know-how and proximity to regular people, regional and local authorities are best placed to create the socioeconomic conditions for attracting talent; whereas these administrations need improved economic and administrative capacity; whereas governance in the EU is improving overall, but disparities remain between and within Member States, and the role and capacity of sub-national governments remain unequal; whereas these administrations need to be supported in ensuring cross-border regional cooperation and in engaging with a diverse range of regional stakeholders to ensure that the aforementioned gaps and disparities can be adequately and equitably closed; whereas, however, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and a place-based approach is the best way to tackle these obstacles;
- O. whereas the regions in which the knowledge economy is better developed tend to be those that have better technological infrastructure, high-quality education systems, a dynamic cultural and artistic environment and a modern network of public healthcare, social and conciliation services; whereas it has been demonstrated that the participatory governance model, in which co-governance is promoted through cooperative work with social partners, organised civil society and public entities, offers better responses adapted to the specific reality of a given territory, as it generates synergies focused on identified needs; whereas physical distance to education infrastructure poses a challenge for young people and adults who want to acquire the skills needed by the labour market in regions in a talent development trap, which increases the mismatch between education levels and available vacant posts;
- P. whereas talent retention does not refer exclusively to stopping the emigration of highly qualified persons from one country to another, or from one region to another, but also to attracting populations whose professional backgrounds are related to jobs and skills that are still in high demand in less-developed regions and territories, as listed in Article 174 TFEU; whereas attracting talent to disadvantaged regions can help spur new activities, create new sustainable jobs and diversify the local economy, thereby making it more resilient; whereas regional attractiveness depends on various factors, such as residents' well-being, the economy and labour market, the natural environment, connectivity, housing, cultural capital and tourism; whereas local authorities play an important role in launching strategies and policies aimed at developing attractive career opportunities and favourable economic prospects in order to mitigate brain drain and at offering equal chances for young people, regardless of their origin;
- Q. whereas 'brain waste' is defined as the phenomenon experienced by workers with advanced degrees or professional qualifications who are either unemployed or employed in jobs that do not match their educational background or professional qualifications;

whereas creating upskilling and reskilling opportunities plays an essential role in limiting skills mismatches in the labour market; whereas there has been a significant exodus of highly skilled young people, especially women, who are leaving rural areas and less-developed areas in search of environments conducive to personal and professional growth; whereas recent data shows that highly skilled people were among the most mobile workers between 2012 and 2019<sup>37</sup>, proving that a knowledge-based economy is a key determinant for mobility within the EU;

- R. whereas retention strategies should encompass not only professions requiring highly educated workers, but all occupations, as it is essential to safeguard the well-being of all workers and improve the social and industrial fabric of all EU regions;
- S. whereas the European Year of Skills should promote the creation of quality jobs and retention strategies as the best way to attract and retain a skilled workforce and promote incentives for employers to invest in the development of their workers' skills, especially in the green and digital sectors;
- T. whereas there is still a deep digital divide in the EU in terms of geography, gender, educational attainment, socioeconomic status and income that prevents some individuals and businesses from reaping the benefits of the digital transformation; whereas this gap could exacerbate the isolation of certain regions;
- U. whereas the outermost regions (ORs) are particularly vulnerable to brain drain, given their specific characteristics, as recognised in Article 349 TFEU; whereas these regions have higher levels of unemployment and lower education rates, while their share of NEETs is above the EU average<sup>38</sup>; whereas young people in the ORs are often forced to move to other regions in order to continue their education, access specific training or find a job, which has a strong impact on the demography and development of these territories;
- V. whereas EU policies addressing brain drain and the negative effects of demographic trends must respect the four freedoms, with particular focus on the free movement of persons, and in no case should they prohibit the migration of citizens of Member States from one EU country to another, or to countries outside the EU;
- W. whereas the concept of 'rural proofing' has become more prevalent after the publication of the long-term vision for rural areas; whereas the concept should not only consist of a general revision of all EU public policies through a 'rural lens' to adapt them to such environments, but must also include assessments of demographic aspects, gender impacts, consequences for work-life balance, job creation and the possibility of attracting talent to sparsely populated areas; whereas EU legislation should include these aspects, through impact assessments carried out prior to the design of public policies for rural and sparsely populated areas;

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<sup>37</sup> European Commission, '[Ranking the Most Mobile Professions](#)', Regulated Professions Database, accessed 27 October 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Commission communication of 3 May 2022 entitled on '[Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU's outermost regions](#)' (COM(2022)0198).

- X. whereas the current European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund (ERDF-CF) pay specific attention to the development challenges at the level of NUTS 3 and local administrative units that are sparsely populated, in particular those that have a population density of fewer than 12.5 inhabitants per square kilometre and areas that have suffered from an average annual population decline of at least 1 % between 2007 and 2017; whereas according to the ERDF-CF, the Member States can, under cohesion policy, develop specific voluntary action plans at local level for such areas to counter these population challenges; whereas these areas tend to fall under the category of ‘less developed’ regions;
- Y. whereas Annex XXVI of the Common Provisions Regulation laying down the methodology on the allocation of global resources per Member State for the political objective of the ERDF-CF on investment in jobs and growth, in particular for the regions classified as ‘less developed’, goes beyond GDP and the unemployment rate and now includes criteria such as the education rate and net migration, therefore reflecting a more pluralistic reality than the measures related exclusively to income per country; whereas the methodology of these allocations could be revised and enhanced in view of the particular challenges faced by regions in a development trap;
- Z. whereas one of the lessons learned through the use of the previous ERDF in times of crisis is that regional and local authorities and stakeholders welcomed the greater flexibility introduced for the remainder of the programming period, as it ensured that affected regions received the necessary support and resources to mitigate the negative effects of crises, enabled faster decision-making and paved the way for greater flexibility to be included in the design of the future cohesion policy;
- AA. whereas the Commission communication entitled ‘Harnessing talent in Europe’s regions’ sets up the Talent Booster Mechanism with the objective of stimulating supply and demand for skills, taking into account the different economic contexts faced by each region; whereas this mechanism includes a new strategy on smart adaptation of regions to demographic transition and direct financial support under existing instruments, thus opening the door to innovative solutions for different demographic realities that have not yet been considered;
1. Welcomes the Commission communication entitled ‘Harnessing talent in Europe’s regions’, which is the first key deliverable of the European Year of Skills, and its overall objective of promoting, retaining and attracting talent to transform all regions into dynamic places; appreciates the strategies presented as a mechanism to avoid economic, social, territorial, and gender disparities between citizens affected by the green and digital transitions; recalls that new challenges require new contributions and asks that cohesion policy be topped up with new budgetary resources to address new challenges; considers it fundamental to implement the concept of rural proofing, which must include assessing the demographic impact, the proximity and accessibility of public services, the issue of quality job creation, the impact on the educational and training framework and the gender impact on rural areas when designing EU policies; emphasises the importance of promoting digital education and training, in line with the EU’s digital targets for 2030, to improve the overall level of digital skills and abilities in order to increase employment opportunities for young people and revitalise rural areas;

2. Is of the belief that the establishment of a rural observatory should be taken as an opportunity to improve databases, especially through the collection of age- and gender-disaggregated data, and to better reflect local realities;
3. Stresses that the strategies and mechanisms presented by the Commission in its communication entitled ‘Harnessing Talent in European Regions’ must adopt an ‘OR reflex’, as called for by Parliament in its resolution of 14 September 2021, meaning that the specific characteristics of the ORs should be systematically taken into account in EU initiatives, legislative proposals and interinstitutional negotiations in order to ensure that they respond to the local realities of these territories;
4. Reiterates the importance of the conclusions of the 2021 Porto Social Summit, which called on the Commission and the Member States to come up with a social resilience package as a set of measures to strengthen social welfare and social protection systems in the EU; highlights the importance of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a guiding compass to a more social Europe and of its action plan as a concrete set of tools to improve EU citizens’ quality of life;
5. Notes that the lack of a binding legal framework for quality traineeships has resulted in young people facing higher social exclusion rates from the labour market, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds and those with disabilities; calls on the Commission to propose a directive to ensure minimum quality standards, including rules on duration, fair remuneration and access to social protection for traineeships in the open labour market to ensure decent standards of living;
6. Points out the importance of bringing children closer to agriculture, even in early childhood, through both theoretical and practical school learning; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen existing programmes and to take additional actions in this domain;
7. Insists on the importance of providing adequate support for young farmers to develop sustainable farming practices from a social, environmental and economic perspective, including agro-ecology and organic farming, to maintain the vitality of the territories;
8. Recalls that policy objective four (PO 4) of the ERDF-CF<sup>39</sup> already envisages the achievement of a more social and inclusive Europe through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights; is of the belief that improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, including early education and care, training and lifelong learning through the development of accessible infrastructure is crucial to achieving these objectives, as well as social cohesion and upward convergence; considers it essential for PO 4 to go hand in hand with the Commission’s long-term vision for rural areas, as demographic challenges are a multidimensional phenomenon affecting regions differently across the EU;
9. Recalls that, according to the eight cohesion report, the primary drivers of migration and brain drain in EU regions are inadequate access to quality public and social services, particularly in education and healthcare, a scarcity of appealing job prospects with competitive wages, and shortcomings in essential infrastructure like transportation and

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<sup>39</sup> Article 3(1)(d).

high-speed internet networks; welcomes the introduction of the ‘do no harm to cohesion’ principle, which is defined as ‘no action should hamper the convergence process or contribute to regional disparities’; calls on the Commission to strengthen and develop this principle as part of the European Semester and to involve local and regional authorities at all stages of the procedures linked with the European Semester and its country-specific recommendations (CSRs);

10. Calls on the Commission to include in its CSRs a state-of-play of cohesion at NUTS 2 level in the Member States to monitor lagging regions’ level of convergence towards the EU average and to include an analysis of existing policies that could explain the situation and possible measures in order to solve regional disparities; believes that CSRs should establish measurable and binding targets on social objectives at territorial level that aim to reduce inequalities and social economic exclusion, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals;
11. Highlights the importance of reviewing EU fiscal rules to support green and social investments in those regions and territories where it is most needed; calls on the Commission to facilitate social and territorial investments by excluding the national co-financing of cohesion funds in deficit and debt calculations for the regions facing a development trap in order to address the social investment gap and growing territorial divergence among EU regions;
12. Welcomes the creation of the Talent Booster Mechanism and its eight specific pillars aimed at boosting talent in regions facing, or at risk of facing, what the Commission calls a talent development trap; calls for clear and objective criteria regarding the definition of regions in, or at risk of, a talent development trap; draws attention to the worrying increase in regions facing this trap and urges the Commission and the Member States to seriously address this challenge by setting regions in, or at risk of, a talent development trap as a core priority of their action and investment under cohesion policy;
13. Highlights the potential of the Technical Support Instrument to provide tailor-made technical expertise and targeted solutions to the Member States, regions and local authorities, enabling them to design and implement smart, sustainable and socially responsible reforms with a view to addressing the multiple challenges they are facing, including depopulation and skills shortages; calls for the instrument to include specific support on the gender-related challenges that currently prevent half of the region’s young people from tapping into their full potential; recalls that this instrument should be tied to social partners’ involvement when supporting the Member States in implementing policies and reforms that are relevant to their economic and social development; calls for stronger technical assistance to be provided to the Member States when implementing the Talent Booster Mechanism;
14. Underlines the central role of the Member States and regional authorities in fighting against gender inequalities in everything from education to employment, and therefore calls for further financial support for regions with lower rates of participation by women in the labour market in order to promote equal opportunities; recalls that measures to strengthen welfare policies, such as parental leave and affordability of early childhood

education, have a spillover effect on the participation of women in the labour market, especially in less-developed regions;

15. Calls on the Commission to establish a task force responsible for implementing the Talent Booster Mechanism, under the joint leadership of the Commissioner for Cohesion and Reform, the Commissioner for Democracy and Demography and the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights; believes that the task force should gather relevant stakeholders, such as representatives of local and regional authorities, the private sector, universities and non-governmental organisations;
16. Calls on the Commission to provide flexibility to the Member States at programme level, with the aim of urgently adopting specific targeted measures, programmes and strategies to support these regions through a differentiated and territorial approach; requests the design and implementation of targeted, smart and specialised strategies for the regions in, or at risk of, a talent development trap;
17. Welcomes the launch of a new initiative on smart adaptation of regions to demographic transition and a new call for proposals under the European Urban initiative; invites the Commission to ensure that, when selecting benefiting regions and territories, particular attention is paid to the geographic balance, the level of development of the regions concerned and the urban-rural divide across the EU; recalls, in this context, that lagging regions, including regions in a development trap and rural areas, are less advantaged when participating in EU open calls to award innovative ideas and disruptive projects;
18. Considers that policies developed under the Talent Booster Mechanism should focus on developing high-quality labour and formation markets, creating new job opportunities that offer attractive wages, ensuring decent living standards, supporting regions in attracting European funds, optimising public services and infrastructure, fostering economic diversification and creating attractive business environments and social cohesion in order to strengthen the economic competitiveness of the affected regions and the EU as a whole;
19. Welcomes the pilot projects through which the Commission has provided tailored technical assistance to selected regions, financed 100 % from the EU budget, in order to develop and implement strategies to retain and attract talent; considers that, in the post-2027 multiannual financial framework, the personalised technical assistance offered by the Commission should be expanded to all 46 regions already in the talent development trap and to all 36 regions at risk of facing a talent development trap in the future;
20. Recalls the need to link the Talent Booster Mechanism with other EU initiatives under the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, designed to match and attract skilled foreign workers to the EU, such as the Talent Partnerships and the Talent Pool; calls on the Commission to offer technical assistance to the Member States through the Talent Booster Mechanism on developing policies aimed to attract talent back to the regions of origin;
21. Recalls that the right to housing is one of the EU's social pillars; believes that incentives should be provided in order to ensure that decent affordable housing is available to prevent exoduses and for talented individuals who decide to return to their place of origin;



22. Bears in mind that less-developed regions have the same particularities as those considered as being ‘in a talent development trap’, such as low population density, low economic resources as a result of low investment opportunities and employability, a lack of infrastructure, ageing populations and a declining working-age population, with citizens with a low social and economic status living in poverty; acknowledges that a substantial number of transition regions are considered as being ‘at a risk of falling into a talent development trap’; points out the need to include in the categorisation of regions at risk of falling into a development trap those deemed as ‘less developed’, as defined in Article 108(2) of the Common Provisions Regulation; highlights, however, that demographic challenges affect all EU regions and may trigger new territorial disparities if left unaddressed; insists, in this regard, on the need to tackle intraregional disparities, including in more developed regions;
23. Is gravely concerned by the fact that one in four children in the European Union is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, which have known mental, social and economic lifelong impacts; stresses that such impacts hinder these citizens from harnessing their talents to the full;
24. Acknowledges the increase in homelessness, which affects over 895 000 people in Europe<sup>40</sup>; calls for the Member States and the EU to increase efforts to ensure that every citizen has access to the basic material conditions needed for a dignified life, including access to shelter and sanitary facilities, which are also needed for them to effectively participate in the labour market;
25. Highlights the mental, social and economic toll of societal and, in many Member States, institutionalised prejudice and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ citizens and recalls that this state of affairs can impede them from fully harnessing their talents;
26. Highlights the importance of the inclusion of citizens living with physical disabilities, and calls for targeted measures to harness their talents by enhancing their participation in the labour market;
27. Points out that minimum wages have failed to keep pace with other wages in many Member States, exacerbating in-work poverty, wage inequality and the ability of low-wage earners to cope with economic difficulties; believes that establishing a European guaranteed minimum wage could limit talent drain;
28. Encourages the financing of specific measures through the multiannual financial framework to address the demographic challenges, with a specific budget for regions with severe and permanent economic and demographic difficulties; considers it necessary, in this context, to reformulate the specific cohesion policy instruments by assigning greater weight to indicators complementary to GDP, such as demographic, social and environmental criteria and the number of NEETs, for allocating funds and providing greater flexibility within the thematic objectives framework; underlines the need to create synergies, where possible, between cohesion policy and common agricultural policy to tackle rural depopulation; insists on the importance of taking into account unemployment and youth unemployment rates, the share of people with tertiary

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<sup>40</sup> FEANTSA, ‘[Report: 8th Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2023](#)’, 5 September 2023.

education and the departure of young workers, in order to give a more precise picture of the socioeconomic situation at regional and sub-regional level;

29. Underlines that regions in or at risk of a talent development trap are characterised by a higher percentage of the population living in rural areas than the EU average and that revitalising rural areas is crucial; welcomes the long-term vision for the EU's rural areas and the launch of the Rural Pact and the EU rural action plan; regrets, nonetheless, the fact that no specific or dedicated financial support has been established for these initiatives; asks the Commission, therefore, to earmark, in the next programming period, at least 5 % of the cohesion policy resources at national level for rural areas;
30. Stresses the multidimensional nature of rural development, which goes beyond agriculture per se; insists on the need to implement a rural-proofing mechanism to assess the impact of EU legislative initiatives on rural areas; notes, however, that only 11.5 % of people living in rural areas work in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors<sup>41</sup>; calls, therefore, for the reintegration of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development under the strategic framework of the Common Provisions Regulation as a separate fund; emphasises that being part of the Cohesion Fund strengthens the possibilities and synergies, via an integrated, multi-fund approach, for investments in rural areas beyond agriculture and for regional development;
31. Considers it necessary to promote the reformulation of the cohesion policy allocation method and co-financing criteria, taking into account a greater number of indicators such as population developments, territorial dispersion, the ageing of the population and negative economic growth; calls for greater weight to be assigned to demographic variables in the allocation of cohesion funds; underlines the importance of the involvement of social partners while drafting new policies and strategies;
32. Highlights the valuable contribution to rural development delivered by actions under the LEADER programme, which aims to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making processes and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas; calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce LEADER by increasing its budgetary envelope and guaranteeing a high level of autonomy for the local action groups regarding their constitution and decision-making processes and reducing the administrative burden;
33. Considers it essential to strengthen and improve the executive and managerial capacities of local administrations and to reduce bureaucratic burdens and gaps among Member States, as well as promoting closer cooperation among regional authorities and the various regional and local stakeholders such as social partners and civil society; recalls the importance of promoting cross-border cooperation, including through the Interreg programme, in order to develop joint policy initiatives and share good practices with a view to increasing the development and competitiveness of research centres, universities and other knowledge and professional development institutions;
34. Believes it necessary to improve the exchange of good practices between the national and local authorities of the different Member States; calls on the Commission to create, under the Erasmus+ programme, a new training scheme dedicated to public

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<sup>41</sup> OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 100.



administration civil servants in order to offer them the opportunity to learn how European, national and local policies are designed and implemented in other Member States;

35. Notes that citizens experiencing poverty, social exclusion and marginalisation in the EU face a disproportionate impediment in harnessing their own potential and accessing education and the labour market;
36. Notes the importance of encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle as a precursor to attracting, training and retaining talent;
37. Recognises the fact that recent geopolitical developments have exposed gaps in the EU's cybersecurity and defence and that, as acknowledged in the recent Commission communication entitled 'Closing the cybersecurity talent gap to boost the EU's competitiveness, growth and resilience'<sup>42</sup>, the security of the EU cannot be guaranteed without the EU's most valuable asset: its people; calls, therefore, for the EU and its Member States to propose a realistic roadmap towards closing the cyber skills gap, including through integrating cybersecurity into educational and training programmes, while ensuring access to apprenticeships and traineeships for young people, including for people living in disadvantaged regions, such as islands and sparsely populated, rural and remote areas;
38. Notes that disadvantaged regions, such as islands, are disproportionately affected by a brain and skills drain and calls for effective measures to address this reality, including by improving accessibility for vulnerable groups, among others, to education, professional training, upskilling and innovative and sustainable entrepreneurship;
39. Recalls that it is essential that Member States, their regions and local authorities, in cooperation with other actors, come up with innovative solutions tailored to each territory and stresses that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to all problems; welcomes the Commission's proposal that Member States set up thematic and regional working groups to address specific challenges under the Talent Booster Mechanism; underlines the importance of these working groups fostering partnerships, especially between developed and lagging regions, including cities and rural areas, both in terms of developing joint projects and attracting EU funds and private or foreign investments, as well as in developing education and specialisation programmes;
40. Insists on the need to design and implement place-based strategies under this new dedicated EU mechanism by adopting a bottom-up approach to local development in order to involve and empower citizens to take ownership of their territories' development; considers it necessary to scale up the model of the 'Digital Europe' programme, which brings together less innovative regions with the most innovative in a collaboration to build new EU value chains by capitalising on the specific assets of each region;
41. Stresses the need to help build strategies and solutions to combat brain drain and talent drain and increase the attractiveness of the ORs, especially for young people; calls on

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<sup>42</sup> Commission communication of 18 April 2023 entitled 'Closing the cybersecurity talent gap to boost the EU's competitiveness, growth and resilience ("The Cybersecurity Skills Academy")' (COM(2023)0207).

the Commission and the Member States to work with local stakeholders, including local and regional authorities, universities, training institutions, the private sector and civil society organisations, in order to support the establishment in each OR of a digital one-stop shop to help young jobseekers find local jobs or training tailored to their profile and skills; stresses the opportunities that would be offered by the creation of agreements and partnerships between education and vocational training institutions and local businesses, in order to promote the provision of traineeships and apprenticeships and the creation of local jobs in the ORs; calls also on the Member States to support programmes for the return of workers and public officials from the ORs to their territories;

42. Highlights the potential of community-led local development to find local solutions to local problems and to design strategies to boost demand for and supply of talent to avoid development traps; takes the view that community-led local development should be mandatory for Member States;
43. Welcomes the fact that the Commission communication aims to strengthen collaboration between regional authorities, social partners, employment services and education and training providers, and underlines the importance of enhancing social dialogue to attract businesses and boost economic development in the affected regions;
44. Notes that, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, with the introduction of austerity measures, privatisation and the deregulation of labour market institutions, public services have been massively underfunded; highlights that less-developed regions and rural and sparsely populated areas have been disproportionately affected by these policies, exacerbating the growing economic, social and territorial disparities across EU regions; urges the Commission to review the rules for the services of general economic interest and to ensure that these services are accessible to all;
45. Reaffirms the need to ensure gender convergence in the labour market and highlights the importance of attracting female talent, especially in STEM fields, by actively creating incentives and opportunities for girls and women to pursue education and careers in these fields and conducting awareness campaigns that counter stereotypes and biases;
46. Recognises the urgent need to prepare the EU workforce for the green and digital transitions and calls on the Member States to address this issue early in the educational process, by including elements of digital and environmental knowledge and understanding in schools' curricula; calls for the development of a strategy for vocational education and business-education partnerships together with social partners, to boost digital and green skills;
47. Reiterates the role of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the EU's economy and calls on the Member States and the Commission to propose measures to enhance the uptake of ready-for-market innovations by SMEs and to establish incentives for SMEs to train and improve the skills of their personnel and workers, especially in the field of digital skills;
48. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to finance and promote specific projects for the development of initiatives to ensure that young people, including those

with fewer opportunities and from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, can access quality education and work-related training, with a particular focus on deficit or high-demand occupations; calls, furthermore, on the Commission and the Member States to stimulate the creation of quality jobs via guaranteed quality and paid apprenticeships and traineeships, thereby enhancing the role of universities, which should actively support the development of innovative start-ups, especially those promoted by young people, through a series of services and resources offered both directly and across a network of partners, and to encourage the participation of young people in their development; considers that the labour market integration of NEETs must be prioritised; highlights, in this regard, the importance of data collection and analysis on labour force surpluses and shortages to observe current trends and anticipate future needs in the labour market in order to develop targeted policies and high-quality training and upskilling strategies to reduce skills mismatches;

49. Highlights the potential of the Just Transition Mechanism, complementing other financial instruments under cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, in supporting the development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to upskill and reskill the labour force and stimulate the dynamism and attractiveness of the territories; encourages the Commission, in this regard, to provide further flexibility in the implementation of the Just Transition Fund to allow impacted territories to fully absorb financial resources and avoid carry-over;
50. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to implement the Council recommendations on individual learning accounts and a European approach to micro-credentials in order to develop tools for tailored learning aimed at the most disadvantaged groups; underlines the importance of recognising prior learning and previously obtained qualifications in order to facilitate participation in further learning activities;
51. Encourages the Member States to align their specific priorities with their demographic needs in future partnership agreements; recalls that it is key to take into account the demographic consequences when implementing ERDF-CF in specific projects;
52. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to make progress towards the digitalisation of public services and to integrate schools, universities, research centres, public transport, efficient governance and digital administration into this transformation, as well as promoting measures to boost the accessibility of services and infrastructures, including those for persons with disabilities;
53. Encourages the Member States to ensure that active labour market policies and cohesion funds drive public investments in sustainable quality jobs, while shifting the functioning of the current educational system and labour market towards a continuous lifelong learning and training environment;
54. Stresses that a reinforced social dialogue and collective bargaining between trade unions and representatives of employers are key aspects of the European social model and essential tools for territorial development and the creation of quality jobs;
55. Deplores the state of pollution of the Mediterranean basin and the increasing economic, environmental, demographic and social challenges faced by coastal and local areas;

underlines that innovative teaching processes and skills in maritime education could make maritime professions more attractive and strengthen a competitive and sustainable blue economy, particularly in the less-developed regions across the different sea basins of the EU; believes that macro-regions play a key role in strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU and its close neighbourhood by empowering cross-border areas to address specific, shared challenges collectively; considers that a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean, with the active involvement of the regional and local authorities concerned, has considerable potential for supporting the diversification of fishers' and aquaculture producers' activities, including retraining and conversion, thus creating quality and sustainable jobs in the blue economy;

56. Acknowledges that direct financial support to regions in or at risk of a talent development trap will be provided under existing instruments, including the Interregional Innovation Investments instrument, that will now take into account such regions; notes that, in order to optimise results through the available financial instruments, the Commission and the Member States should identify tax incentives and breaks for companies operating in European regions that are part of the 'talent development trap'; regrets, nonetheless, that no specific or dedicated financial support has been established for this purpose; suggests that the new programming period should include the launch of a European roadmap to reduce the number of NEETs and to create a new dedicated priority area under the European Social Fund Plus that addresses brain drain, education and job creation; suggests that this new priority area be financed with new budgetary resources topping up the European Social Fund Plus of the current programming period;
57. Agrees with the mid-term review of the 2021-2027 cohesion policy programmes, providing an opportunity to assess the situation of regions in or at risk of being in a talent development trap and to align the programming of cohesion policy funds where appropriate;
58. Acknowledges also that, as the twin green and digital transitions progress, many regions and sectors will be required to undergo a profound transformation, which will require substantial investments; acknowledges, therefore, that such regions and sectors would require tailored support in order to avoid massive job loss; considers that, should a decline in employment occur as a result of challenges posed by the transformation, it is necessary to provide workers with reskilling and upskilling opportunities and alternative employment options; emphasises the importance of supporting the diversification of local and regional economies in order to promote local resilience;
59. Recalls that the establishment of research institutes and networks of researchers can help to tackle the brain drain faced by territories with highly qualified scientific researchers; encourages the Member States and their regions to set up networks of researchers and institutes to facilitate the mobility of such professionals, paying particular attention to sciences related to rural areas such as innovation in the agri-food sector and sustainable development, among other things;
60. Considers the world of the arts and creative industries as key drivers in attracting citizens, with particular attention to medium-sized urban areas; suggests the further development of informal networks of cities with creative industries, in order to assess

and develop new policy instruments with the aim of strengthening the ability of territorial economies to address the common challenge of the brain drain of creative talent;

61. Believes that further expanding the concept of ‘smart cities’ as part of the specialisation strategies in the given regions or cities is key to developing research and development projects that can attract highly skilled workers to those areas;
62. Stresses the importance of synergies between different funding tools to channel an adequate level of funding towards regions in or at risk of a talent development trap through a multi-fund approach; calls on the Commission to considerably reduce the administrative complexity that the managing authorities have encountered in implementing the multi-fund approach;
63. Considers it essential that the next programming period also includes dedicated measures to ensure physical and digital accessibility, including in areas with low connectivity, to education infrastructure, especially for children and persons with reduced mobility or disabilities;
64. Underlines that the Member States and their regions and local authorities should undertake a thorough and comprehensive analysis in order to understand the status of the talent to be targeted; believes, in this regard, it is key that mechanisms that provide the means for such talent to voice their requirements and needs are put in place in order for public policies to be as tailor-made as possible;
65. Calls on the Commission, the Member States and regional and local authorities to promote policies and instruments that foster local entrepreneurship, self-employment and alternative models of business development that make less-developed regions more attractive;
66. Emphasises the importance of supporting the economic diversification of local and regional economies, as well as supporting the rejuvenation of certain ageing sectors in order to promote local resilience;
67. Underlines the need to strongly improve access to quality public services such as health, and social protection, especially in areas with severe and permanent natural and demographic handicaps; encourages the Member States to implement digital tools and platforms such as telemedicine or itinerant medicine solutions and services; highlights the importance of quality, affordable and safe public transport and transport infrastructure to improve mobility solutions; stresses the need to boost digital connectivity in order to enhance the attractiveness of regions as a destination for talents, firms and investors by facilitating teleworking, ensuring social connections and increasing opportunities for productivity and growth; calls on the Member States to launch and implement national strategies aimed at reinforcing public services in rural areas and regions affected by negative migration rates, as a concrete measure to reverse depopulation;
68. Calls for education and training to be made accessible to all ages and social groups, both on-site and through remote access; points out the need for Member States to implement policies that foster women’s and girls’ participation in STEM education programmes

and to provide incentives to create jobs in sectors where their knowledge can be applied; emphasises the importance of universities and vocational education and training providers in stimulating dynamic innovation ecosystems, harnessing talent, developing knowledge clusters and attracting businesses to their areas by partnering with them on programmes to train workers in the new skills needed in the area;

69. Urges, furthermore, the Commission and the Member States to increase investments to ensure widespread digital connectivity, especially in remote and disadvantaged regions, thus strengthening economic and educational opportunities for all; calls, in this regard, for access to internet as a fundamental right to be recognised;
70. Calls on the Member States to consolidate policies for attracting teachers to regions and localities facing ‘talent development traps’, ensuring attractive salaries and decent living conditions;
71. Encourages regional and local authorities to accelerate the development of high-speed and 5G networks in rural areas to increase economic opportunities for businesses and teleworking; requests that the authorities of the Member States launch support schemes and information campaigns aimed at promoting the advantages of living outside overcrowded cities and the urban-rural transition, especially for professionals who telework;
72. Considers it essential to prioritise policies and measures that facilitate a work-life balance by guaranteeing inclusive access to accessible and affordable childcare facilities and education to all, flexible working hours, parental leave and other incentives for families, decent wages and better working conditions; takes the view that investment in research and development, technology and infrastructure is essential in attracting technology companies and start-ups – industries which tend to require highly skilled talent; calls on the Member States to provide tax incentives, reliefs and advisory services to support local businesses hiring young people with a view to fostering the creation of new jobs; encourages regional and local authorities facing the ‘talent development trap’ to join the European Pact for Skills to equip their workforces with the competences needed for the green and digital transitions;
73. Underlines the importance of facilitating the recognition of qualifications and supporting language learning for non-EU nationals in order to better match their skills to local development needs; emphasises the essential role of regional and local authorities in providing accompanying measures to ensure the successful social inclusion of migrant workers in host communities, in order to enhance the benefits of migration;
74. Calls on the Commission to adopt appropriate settlement facilitation policies to meet housing needs for talent and to tackle the problem of accessibility in more inland and mountainous areas by means of proper investment in infrastructure, public services, connectivity, care and mobility, with a view to making these areas more attractive as places to study or find employment;
75. Considers it essential to design policies to attract and retain families by offering job opportunities for both partners, implementing programmes aimed at making communities safer for kids and environments friendlier for women, offering affordable



housing through specific grant and loan schemes, and implementing cultural policies to foster talent attraction and retention;

76. Urges all Member States to make childcare more affordable and accessible in order to help ensure the fair and unhindered participation of caregivers, who are predominately female, in the labour market;
77. Encourages the Member States and local authorities to implement policies and strategies aimed at mitigating brain drain and attracting talents back in the context of multi-level governance; suggests involving all relevant stakeholders (public authorities, businesses, universities, non-governmental organisations, etc.) in designing the most adept tools such as subsidies for employers hiring young talents and talents returning to their country, grants covering return expenses and subsidies for starting entrepreneurial activity;
78. Reiterates the need for an ambitious and sustainable policy on legal migration and integration at EU level; underlines the need for a strategic approach to the integration of non-EU nationals as a potential driver of local growth and welcomes measures paving the way towards a more sustainable and inclusive approach to labour mobility;
79. Acknowledges the central role of agriculture in rural and depopulated areas and the importance of the EU Pact for Skills in the agri-food sector; calls on the Commission to support generational renewal in the farming sector and the setting up of new businesses in rural areas; highlights the economic potential of women in rural areas and calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure targeted support and to facilitate access to funding opportunities and business skills, with a view to increasing female entrepreneurship;
80. Highlights the emergent phenomenon of ‘third places’ as a new vector characterising the functioning of democratic societies; stresses their central role in revitalising rural and depopulated areas, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to local democracy and the empowerment of citizens, enhancing innovation capabilities and creativity, improving the quality of life of workers and increasing the performance of companies and employees; calls on the Commission to launch a European initiative to support the creation and development of ‘third places’, matching citizens’ needs in terms of financial, networking and methodological support;
81. Advocates the promotion of supranational cooperation networks aimed at promoting the exchange of ideas and skills for sustainable growth and the circulation of talent, thereby acting as a driver for the dissemination of knowledge, experience and training; underlines, in this regard, the crucial role of the Interreg programme in contributing to enhancing the attractiveness of border regions facing a talent development trap; stresses the importance of removing obstacles to cross-border cooperation;
82. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the dissemination of social innovation hubs to foster the upgrade of infrastructure and improve the conditions of accessibility to innovative services for citizens;
83. Calls on the Commission and national agencies to develop, in the context of the Erasmus+ programme, new mobility opportunities tailored to regional assets and the

demand for training and skills, particularly in new professions linked to the green and digital transitions; stresses, in this regard, the potential of the ORs in hosting young people on mobility schemes, particularly in the areas of the blue economy, biodiversity conservation and the circular economy;

84. Underlines that 31 % of the population of regions facing a ‘talent development trap’ live in rural areas; calls on the Member States to accelerate the implementation of measures set out in the EU 2040 rural action plan, in particular those regarding the development of smart villages, thus stimulating economic diversification and attracting businesses, which are key elements to enhancing the quality of life and offering young professionals the prospect of decent living conditions in rural areas;
85. Recognises the shortage of available workforce in Europe, including in the healthcare and tourism sectors; restates the need for legal migration pathways and other measures to address the various skills gaps in Europe;
86. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work with the local and regional authorities of the ORs to implement development strategies by stepping up integration and regional cooperation, in particular through the Interreg programme; stresses, in this regard, the potential of strengthening economic ties, student mobility and exchange programmes, and sectoral cooperation between the ORs and partner countries in their regional areas;
87. Recalls that operating aid, as set out in the Commission’s regional aid map, includes differentiated taxation; notes that this can be a useful tool for territories with a low population density in order to help make them more attractive to investment, encourage entrepreneurship and attract people; notes that the benefits of living in rural and natural areas are enhanced by a more favourable fiscal framework;
88. Understands that a digital, competitive and resilient economy is an essential prerequisite to harnessing talent and stresses the role of digitalisation as a tool to increase the competitiveness of SMEs, particularly in the EU’s peripheral, insular and disadvantaged regions;
89. Encourages Member State authorities to intensify the exchange of experiences and good practices regarding the development and modernisation of rural areas on the EU rural revitalisation platform and on the forum for localities that have joined the ‘start-up villages’ concept;
90. Expresses its concern that the intensification of territorial development discrepancies resulting from ‘talent development traps’ could lead to an increase in the number of citizens who consider themselves neglected and left behind by EU policies, which could further intensify the existing Eurosceptic current ahead of the 2024 Parliament elections;
91. Expresses its concern that the blocking of Romania and Bulgaria, without a legal basis related to the accession criteria, from the Schengen Area drastically affects cross-border cooperation, the mobility of workers, the viability of enterprises and the economic development of the cross-border regions of the two Member States, pushing them further into the ‘talent development trap’; reiterates its calls to the Council to take



measures to avoid the misuse of the right of veto and calls on the Spanish Presidency of the Council to give special priority and schedule a vote on this topic by the end of 2023;

92. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase efforts to raise awareness about Erasmus+ programmes, including Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, thereby facilitating the exchange of knowledge, the development of linguistic and entrepreneurial skills and encouraging talent mobility;
93. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The European Year of Skills has put the investment in a talented workforce at the core of EU policy making. It is also in this context that the Commission has launched the Communication on Harnessing Talents in EU regions, linking the need for such investments with the impact of demographic trends in the EU's workforce. This report serves as an answer to such Communication, providing further analysis of the demographic and skills situation in the EU, as well as putting forward proposals that aim at finding innovative solutions. The European Parliament is of the belief that Cohesion Policy has an important role to play when talking about addressing the challenges in the future of the labour market.

Recent decades have seen a slowdown of population growth, challenging the EU's experienced steady population growth over the last 50 years. This population decline particularly affects rural, mountainous, isolated and outermost areas, which tend to have older populations compared to cities and suburbs. The lack of connectivity, public services and employment opportunities in rural regions contribute to the migration of young people to urban areas, posing challenges to demographic structures. Furthermore, such 'youth exodus' translates into a dramatic loss of talent in those particularly vulnerable regions, that now face enormous difficulties to attract and establish population in their territories.

The harnessing of talents in EU regions must have the European Pillar of Social Rights at the core of its action. Talent drain is closely linked to the need for improving working and living conditions in low-income regions with social and economic disparities, aligning the Social pillar with the commitment to reducing such disparities. In this regard, policymakers need to increase their efforts to create learning and working opportunities, adapting education and training programmes to the skills required by a job market in constant transformation. To that end, social partners, universities, research institutes and the private sector need to be fully involved in the conversation, creating synergies and putting forward projects that better reflect each territory's socio-economic reality.

Addressing the challenges of population loss in Member States requires positive migration of workers, including those with tertiary education. In this regard, regional and local authorities play a crucial role in creating the socio-economic conditions to attract talent, and their executive capability should be reinforced when needed, as they are the public administrations that can better assess the need of their territories, and remain the closest to its citizens.

Future design of EU policies aiming at tackling talent retention and brain drain should assess their demographic impact, job creation, educational framework and gender impact, expanding the concept of 'rural proofing' to a more adequate reflection of the socio-economic reality of each region. In this regard, it is essential that clear and objective criteria are laid out when defining regions in or at risk of a talent development trap. Less developed regions share similarities with those at risk, necessitating their inclusion in the categorisation.

Both the Commission and Member States should finance and promote projects for young people's access to training, the creation of quality jobs, and guaranteed paid traineeships. Future Partnership Agreements should align specific priorities with demographic needs. While existing instruments provide financial support to regions at risk of a talent development

trap, the creation of a dedicated Fund addressing brain drain is recommended for the new programming period.

Ensuring access to quality public services, essential transport infrastructure, digital connectivity, and measures facilitating work-life balance are of outmost priority. Additionally, promoting supranational cooperation networks will foster the exchange and circulation of talent, facilitating the dissemination of knowledge, experience, and training.

26.4.2023

## **LETTER OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

Mr Younous Omarjee  
Chair  
Committee on Regional Development  
BRUSSELS

Subject: Opinion on harnessing talent in Europe's regions (2023/2044(INI))

Dear Mr Chair,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs has been asked to submit an opinion to your committee. At its meeting of 1 March 2023, the committee decided to send the opinion in the form of a letter.

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs considered the matter at its meeting of 26 April 2023. At that meeting, it decided to call on the Committee on Regional Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution.

Yours sincerely,

Dragoş Pîslaru

## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Regional development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas a skilled workforce is crucial to ensuring socially fair and just green and digital transitions and to strengthening the Union's sustainable growth, economic stability and resilience in the face of demographic change and adverse external shocks, and whereas more adequate and future-oriented skills open up new employment opportunities and empower workers and job-seekers to fully participate in the labour market, society and democracy;
  - B. whereas regional inequalities may force workers to pursue employment opportunities in a different region or Member State; whereas cohesion policy instruments need to address the multiple factors influencing migration to cities and/or other regions or Member States; whereas ambitious investments and quality jobs, as well as improving the accessibility and quality of services and infrastructure are of particular importance in regions at risk of depopulation in order to boost their economic recovery and long-term competitiveness in the single market and thus reverse negative demographic trends;
  - C. whereas the European Labour Authority, in its report entitled 'Report on labour shortages and surpluses', and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, in its report entitled 'Cybersecurity skills development in the EU', identified that 28 occupations were classified as having skills shortages in 2021, including in the healthcare, hospitality, construction and service sectors, and identified shortages of IT and security specialists, in particular cybersecurity experts, and workers with a science, technology, engineering and mathematics background;
  - D. whereas the European Year of Skills should promote the creation of quality jobs and retention strategies as the best way to attract and retain a skilled workforce and promote incentives for employers to invest in the development of their workers' skills especially in the green and digital sectors;
- 1. Welcomes the Commission's Communication on harnessing talent in Europe's regions ahead of the European Year of Skills, which aims to further promote vocational and professional training, reskilling and upskilling and to ensure that nobody is left behind in the green and digital transitions and the economic recovery; calls on the Commission to make the most out of the European Year of Skills, not least by promoting upskilling and reskilling programmes within sectors and regions which are lagging behind in terms of competitiveness and innovation or are subject to profound transformations;
  - 2. Takes note of the Talent Booster Mechanism as a new dedicated and comprehensive initiative to boost "talent" in regions facing or at risk of facing a "talent development trap";
  - 3. Stresses in this context the need to match workers and job seekers' aspirations, needs and vocational and professional training and skills-set, including crosscutting soft skills

and skills acquired during mobility, with labour market needs and opportunities, especially those offered by the green and digital transitions and emerging sectors;

4. Notes in this regard that investment in lifelong learning, reskilling and upskilling is essential, including by leveraging instruments such as the ESF+, to anticipate future needs and to help address labour shortages by closing skills gaps, tackling skills mismatches and creating quality jobs so as to empower workers and job seekers and all people in the Union;
5. Invites social partners to play a key role in developing training strategies, including equal access to upskilling and reskilling programmes for all workers and stresses the need for collective agreements to include strong provisions in that respect; recalls that social dialogue is essential to develop effective and future-oriented skills strategies, including at company level, recalling democracy at work;
6. Regrets that labour shortages are, in some cases, also the result of unattractive jobs and poor working conditions, emphasises therefore that tackling those issues, by means of decent working conditions and retention policies, is important for a well-functioning future labour market; stresses that improving job quality in sectors and companies with poor working conditions is an important element for addressing the issue of brain drain which results in growing inequalities between regions, unequal development as well as unequal capacity to drive innovation and create jobs;
7. Considers that promoting equal access to skills development, ensuring life-long learning for all, while paying special attention to low-skilled workers, reducing inequalities and segregation in education and training, offering career progression opportunities as well as promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills are key to empower people to access or create quality employment and to fully participate in the economy and society;
8. Notes that in the context of a rapidly changing technological environment, digital skills need to be kept up to date; welcomes the role of VET in providing quality learning opportunities and promoting talent for young people and adults alike;
9. Emphasises that more focus needs to be placed on integrating people from underrepresented groups into the labour market, in particular women and young people, especially those not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), low-skilled persons, older workers, persons with disabilities, people from disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds, as well as people living in depopulating, rural and remote areas as well as in the outermost regions;
10. Stresses that a low level of job offers has negative spill-over effects as it pushes people, especially young people, to look for jobs elsewhere, contributes to social challenges at the regional and local level, such as unemployment, demographic ageing, poverty and social exclusion, as well as the declining of public and private services; highlights the importance of close cooperation among local and regional authorities, education and training institutions and companies; therefore supports the creation and financing of local pacts for skills and hubs for skills development in cooperation with employment agencies;

11. Calls on the Member States to invest more in education, and together with the employers, in the vocational training systems and professional training as well as re- and upskilling; supports increasing intra-EU mobility and attracting people from third countries with the skills needed in Member States, by promoting training, including language education and training, and skills development, and by improving the recognition of qualifications and facilitating the recognition of skills; encourages public employment authorities and private employment agencies to provide mobile workers with relevant information and guidance.

19.9.2023

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

for the Committee on Regional Development

on harnessing talent in Europe's regions  
(2023/2044(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Camilla Laureti

### **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 rural areas are more affected than other regions by demographic decline and insufficient talent development, suffering from high numbers of young people leaving and low generational renewal, which contributes to ageing demographics and overall population decline and this difference is likely to be exacerbated in the future owing to the difficulty of promoting, retaining and attracting talent; whereas the common agricultural policy (CAP) 2023-2027 is structured around 10 specific objectives, with generational renewal being a priority, along with ensuring vibrant rural areas and fostering knowledge and innovation, which will contribute to counteracting the 'talent development trap';
- B. whereas young people living in rural areas have a significantly lower share of tertiary level educational attainment (29.6 %) compared to those living in cities (51.4 %) and in towns and suburbs (35.3 %); whereas 72.3 % of farm managers in the EU in 2020 had only practical experience, 17.15 % had basic agricultural training and only 8.9 % had graduated from tertiary education (in 2019); whereas all young people should have equal opportunities regardless of geography; whereas in some EU countries, multi-functionality already represents, for young people, a driving force for entrepreneurial growth, and many innovative companies led by under 40s operate in activities connected to traditional agriculture, such as agri-kindergartens, agri-wellness, renewable energy production, or social agriculture; whereas young farmers tend to be innovative, especially in the use of new technologies and their skills and capabilities are essential to enable the green and digital transition;
- C. whereas rural areas are of great importance for food production as well as for delivering on the European Green Deal, climate neutrality and Sustainable Development Goals; whereas the Eurobarometer shows that 91 % of 15–24-year-olds believe that tackling climate change can help to improve their own health and well-being;
- D. whereas the latest statistics indicate that the EU population is projected to decrease from 447.9 million in 2022 to 419.5 million in 2100; whereas it is estimated that the average



age of the EU 27 population will increase by 5.8 years between 2022 and 2100, with a considerable reduction in the number and share of working-age persons<sup>43</sup>; whereas one in three persons living in rural areas are likely to be aged 65 or over by 2050<sup>44</sup> and the working-age population is expected to shrink still further over the next years and decades; highlights the challenges for public expenditure in relation to pensions, healthcare, and the labour markets; whereas a long-term European vision is needed, placing particular emphasis on programmes for the active involvement of older people in community life;

- E. whereas Parliament's resolution of 13 December 2022 on a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas<sup>45</sup> underlined the need to ensure access to services of general interest in rural communities, with due consideration to education, training, lifelong learning and upskilling, in particular with regard to digital and business skills; whereas people living in certain rural areas suffer from a lack of access to important basic services such as water services, sanitation, road connectivity, transport, healthcare, education and broadband internet, among others; whereas it is essential to improve rural infrastructure, with adequate financial support, as this would make these regions more attractive to the younger generation and entrepreneurs;
- F. whereas farming will require more know-how from farmers and other professionals and constant adaptation, owing to the rapid progress of digitalisation and farming-related technologies; whereas it is essential to enhance information technology infrastructure, particularly through the establishment of high-speed broadband connections; whereas in some Member States, up to 25 % of rural households do not have access to the internet<sup>46</sup>; whereas it is equally important to promote digital education and training in line with the EU's digital targets for 2030, given that having the right skills is essential to manage a farm, to adapt to changing farming conditions as well as to face crises and challenges;
- G. whereas the EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2022 measures the major factors of competitiveness for all the NUTS-2 level regions across the EU, which includes rural areas; whereas the Index found that the Member States with the highest proportion of the least competitive rural regions in the EU were Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain<sup>47</sup>;
- H. whereas 82 regions from 16 Member States are severely affected by the declining working-age population, low percentage of graduates or negative mobility of the population aged 15-39; whereas 46 of these regions are already judged to be in the 'talent development trap', while the other 36 are at risk of falling into in this trap in the near future;

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<sup>43</sup> Eurostat 2023, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population\\_projections\\_in\\_the\\_EU](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_projections_in_the_EU).

<sup>44</sup> Eurostat, Ageing Europe, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing\\_Europe\\_-\\_statistics\\_on\\_population\\_developments](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Ageing_Europe_-_statistics_on_population_developments).

<sup>45</sup> European Parliament 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. OJ C 177, 17.5.2023, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC\\_CI\\_IN\\_H\\_custom\\_2784346/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_CI_IN_H_custom_2784346/default/table?lang=en).

<sup>47</sup> European Commission, EU Regional Competitiveness Index 2022.

- I. whereas Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the EU must aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions, paying particular attention to certain regions, notably rural areas;
  - J. whereas gender equality is a fundamental value of the EU, recognised in the Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights; whereas gender inequalities persist in particular in rural areas; whereas the role of women is essential in the development of territories, both through innovation and the preservation of traditions;
1. Stresses that a concerted effort is needed to harness the potential of people living in rural areas in order to ensure that their communities are vibrant and that they offer good services, work opportunities and favourable economic prospects to mitigate brain drain, as well as fostering the sustainable development of society, the environment and diverse economic activities, both agricultural and non-agricultural, including multifunctional farms and short supply chains to promote local resilience; highlights that the implementation of EU policies and actions should be combined with national, regional and local ones with a place-based approach, offering tailored-made targeted solutions;
  2. Recalls that access to basic services of general interest is a prerequisite to keep communities attractive for residents and potential newcomers; recognises that many rural regions have suffered from long-term underinvestment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure appropriate public support and targeted investments to tackle these challenges; calls for greater targeted financial support, especially for SMEs in rural areas, to enable these regions to grow and develop; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop concrete and prompt actions to grant equal access to quality services and infrastructure, such as early childhood education and care, training and education, healthcare, public transport, energy supply and internet access, for people living in every European region;
  3. Highlights the potential of rural areas, and farms in particular, for the development of renewable energies, for example by placing solar panels on the roofs of farm buildings; underlines the need to ensure that rural areas are well connected to an adequately reinforced electricity grid in order to allow rural renewable energy producers to fully participate in the energy transition;
  4. Welcomes the Commission communication on harnessing talent in Europe's regions, agrees with its general objectives and considers it an opportunity for coordinated action for the future of Europe's talent and regions, ensuring that no one is left behind;
  5. Recognises the importance of infrastructure development in rural regions in order to attract investment and employment opportunities to these areas and halt rural depopulation;
  6. Emphasises that the decline of certain regions, in particular in rural areas, if not correctly addressed, will continue to have a negative impact on the potential for growth, development, and attractiveness of these areas and of Europe's regions as a whole;
  7. Calls for a rural-proofing mechanism for EU legislation to be introduced, to ensure that rural regions are not unfairly impacted by any new proposals and to ensure that rural concerns are taken into account during the decision-making process;

8. Calls for increased support for higher education institutes in rural regions to improve their research and development capabilities to attract increased funding, and thereby improve their potential for innovation;
9. Points out that the ‘talent development trap’ occurs in regions with insufficiently skilled workers, and constitutes a greater challenge, particularly for communities that are far away from universities and higher education institutions, or where effective transport solutions are not available to enable access to these institutions; calls on the Member States to cooperate with regions and local stakeholders to develop efficient strategies to ensure that suitable transport solutions are in place to allow citizens living in rural areas to access higher education or vocational training; underlines the importance of providing incentives, including but not limited to financial benefits, for individuals and organisations that carry out activities or provide services in rural areas, in order to stimulate economic activity, to promote new activities and help young people to find alternative jobs; points out that innovation and education play a crucial role in ensuring that all EU regions can build a supportive innovation environment and develop their populations’ talents in order to ensure their future competitiveness; stresses that rural areas face a greater challenge than urban areas in ensuring the development of digital skills and calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure broadband connectivity in rural areas and improve the level of digital skills;
10. Points out the importance of bringing children closer to agriculture even in early childhood, through both theoretical and practical school learning; calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen existing programmes and to take additional actions in this domain;
11. Insists on the need to reduce administrative burdens while ensuring better access to land and capital, predictable incomes and fair standards of living, as well as better awareness of funding options, in particular among young farmers;
12. Highlights that regions faced with a shrinking workforce need to develop economic diversification strategies to foster local resilience, offer more work opportunities and increase their attractiveness; whereas rural regions comprise much more than agricultural landscapes, and these regions play a central role in a just, green and digital transition and have a diverse range of economic, cultural and environmental attributes, making an indispensable contribution to the structure of our societies; calls for actions to enhance the role of agritourism, sustainable tourism and related sustainable activities in Europe’s regions in order to increase additional sources of income in rural areas and to promote and preserve natural and cultural heritage; stresses that, besides agriculture, tourism is a key source of competitiveness for rural areas, especially considering the potential of diversified models of sustainable rural tourism;
13. Regrets that people in rural areas face multiple challenges such as a lack of appropriate resources and administrative burdens, and believes that Member States should consider tax exemptions in rural areas as a measure to attract young people and investors; recognises the importance of the EU Pact for Skills in the agri-food sector and calls on the Commission and the Member States to allocate funding for agricultural and rural development innovation, training and advisory hubs to boost the provision of training on farming skills, digital skills and administrative or financial issues, going beyond

compliance with the obligations under the CAP, in order to reduce the digital gap and the availability of services compared to urban areas;

14. Recognises the importance of investing in the skills and capabilities of women and young people in areas at risk of depopulation, which benefits all communities; calls, therefore, for measures to create economic, social and other opportunities, as well as innovative and sustainable jobs and services, in particular with a view to supporting generational renewal in the farming sector and the setting up of new businesses in rural areas; insists on the importance of providing adequate support for young farmers to develop sustainable farming practices from a social, environmental and economic perspective, including agroecology and organic farming, to maintain the vitality of the territories; calls for efforts to identify and deploy resources to encourage farmers to develop short supply chains and to boost the EU's agri-food sector;
15. Calls on the Commission to increase EU funding for research into support for women in rural areas, in order to strengthen the evidence base for future policies; highlights the economic potential of women in rural areas and calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure targeted support to facilitate access to funding opportunities and business skills, with a view to increasing female entrepreneurship in rural areas;
16. Welcomes the social conditionality introduced by the new CAP, aimed at improving the working conditions of workers employed in the agri-food sector;
17. Calls on the Commission and Member States to undertake actions aimed at improving technological, environmental and managerial skills among farmers, in particular young farmers, and fostering the exchange of best practices;
18. Stresses the importance of the availability and quality of agricultural education and training in supporting farmers in adapting to a changing environment and fulfilling their vital role in ensuring food security, environmental sustainability and contributing to the sustainable development of rural areas; highlights the potential of diversifying training models to better address farmers' diversity and specific needs (e.g. peer-to-peer learning or mentoring schemes); calls on the Member States to strengthen public-private cooperation, in particular between vocational training institutions and local businesses, to tailor curricula to labour market needs, aligning theory and practice on the ground to seize local and regional opportunities; considers that young people should use the programmes offered by Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and other relevant EU funds such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in order to maximise their opportunities;
19. Underlines the importance of including women and young people's perspectives in relevant strategies, policies, action plans and measures as well as of involving them in the decision-making process, applying gender mainstreaming and an intergenerational approach at every level of policymaking;
20. Highlights the importance of access to well paid jobs in rural areas and notes that those who move out of rural areas generally experience higher earnings growth; insists that rural and remote areas be given special attention with regard to employment prospects as they are at higher risk of having fewer opportunities; recognises the role played by the CAP in fostering cooperation at local level, by offering Member States a range of

instruments, such as the EU CAP Network, LEADER, Smart Villages and support to producer organisations;

21. Considers that the establishment of a rural observatory should be taken as an opportunity to improve databases, especially through the collection of age and gender-disaggregated data, and better reflect local realities; underlines the need, in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation<sup>48</sup>, to collect and analyse more data concerning the overall situation of rural areas, in particular regarding women and young farmers;
22. Stresses that the increasing use of digital technologies in agriculture, and in particular space data, is helping to address a host of challenges that farmers are faced with, improving farm profitability and resource efficiency while contributing to sustainability goals; calls on the Commission and the Member States to make full use of the potential of space data in agriculture, as this will increase farm profitability and the attractiveness of farming for younger people; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure stable, high-speed broadband coverage throughout the EU, including in rural areas, to certify geospatial data for use in precision agriculture, to ensure that digitalisation is inclusive and accessible and to support farmers with training, resources and incentives to adopt new technologies;
23. Invites Member States to begin mapping public arable land, and to prioritise its allocation to young farmers;
24. Points out that EU funding, such as that disbursed through rural development measures, plays a crucial role in the ability of rural areas to react to demographic challenges; underlines that where national, regional or local strategies allow for synergies between EU cohesion policy and the rural development dimension of the new CAP, the implementation should be carefully planned to maximise simplification and avoid administrative burdens for beneficiaries; calls for particular attention to be paid to the problems of young farmers and for increased support for their access to EU funds; calls on the Commission and on Member States to draw up guidelines aimed at facilitating funding synergies between the CAP, cohesion policy, NextGenerationEU and any other source of EU funding.

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<sup>48</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC. OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	19.9.2023
<b>Result of final vote</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">+:</div> <div>46</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">-:</div> <div>0</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: flex-end; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: right; padding-right: 10px;">0:</div> <div>0</div> </div>
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	<p>Mazaly Aguilar, Clara Aguilera, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Benoît Biteau, Daniel Buda, Isabel Carvalhais, Asger Christensen, Angelo Ciocca, Dacian Cioloș, Ivan David, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, José Manuel Fernandes, Paola Ghidoni, Dino Giarrusso, Francisco Guerreiro, Martin Häusling, Martin Hlaváček, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Jarosław Kalinowski, Camilla Laureti, Gilles Lebreton, Norbert Lins, Marlene Mortler, Ulrike Müller, Maria Noichl, Juozas Olekas, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Daniela Rondinelli, Bronis Ropė, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Veronika Vrecionová, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez</p>
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	<p>Peter Jahr, Petros Kokkalis, Tilly Metz, Michaela Šojdrová, Irène Tolleret, Emma Wiesner</p>

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

46	+
ECR	Mazaly Aguilar, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Veronika Vrecionová
ID	Angelo Ciocca, Ivan David, Paola Ghidoni, Gilles Lebreton
NI	Dino Giarrusso
PPE	Daniel Buda, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, José Manuel Fernandes, Peter Jahr, Jarosław Kalinowski, Norbert Lins, Marlene Mortler, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Michaela Šojdrová, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Renew	Dacian Cioloș, Jérémy Decerle, Martin Hlaváček, Ulrike Müller, Irène Tolleret, Emma Wiesner, Asger Christensen
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Attila Ara-Kovács, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Camilla Laureti, Maria Noichl, Jozas Olekas, Daniela Rondinelli
The Left	Petros Kokkalis, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Verts/ALE	Benoît Biteau, Francisco Guerreiro, Martin Häusling, Tilly Metz, Bronis Ropé

0	-

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

<b>Date adopted</b>	24.10.2023
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 28 -: 0 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Matteo Adinolfi, Pascal Arimont, Adrian-Dragoş Benea, Isabel Benjumea Benjumea, Vlad-Marius Botoş, Andrea Cozzolino, Corina Creţu, Rosa D'Amato, Matthias Ecke, Mircea-Gheorghe Hava, Ondřej Knotek, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Nora Mebarek, Martina Michels, Alin Mituţa, Dan-Ştefan Motreanu, Andželika Anna Możdżanowska, Denis Nesci, Niklas Nienass, Andrey Novakov, Younous Omarjee, Tsvetelina Penkova, Maxette Pirbakas, Susana Solís Pérez, Irène Tolleret, Monika Vana
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Carlos Coelho, Ana Miranda, Jan Olbrycht, Bronis Ropé



## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

28	+
ECR	Andželika Anna Możdżanowska, Denis Nesci
NI	Andrea Cozzolino, Maxette Pirbakas
PPE	Pascal Arimont, Isabel Benjumea Benjumea, Carlos Coelho, Mircea-Gheorghe Hava, Dan-Ștefan Motreanu, Andrey Novakov, Jan Olbrycht
Renew	Vlad-Marius Botoș, Alin Mituța, Susana Solís Pérez, Irène Tolleret
S&D	Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Corina Crețu, Matthias Ecke, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Nora Mebarek, Tsvetelina Penkova
The Left	Martina Michels, Younous Omarjee
Vers/ALE	Rosa D'Amato, Ana Miranda, Niklas Nienass, Bronis Ropė, Monika Vana

0	-

2	0
ID	Matteo Adinolfi
Renew	Ondřej Knotek

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention