



2022/2147(INI)

10.2.2023

OPINION

of the Committee on Budgets

for the Committee on Regional Development

on the assessment of the new Commission communication on outermost regions
(2022/2147(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: José Manuel Fernandes

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Welcomes the Commission communication on Outermost Regions (ORs) (COM(2022)0198); calls for this strategy to be factored into the upcoming mid-term revision of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) and the post-2027 MFF; recalls that ORs are major assets for the Union, but that they face specific permanent constraints as well as major economic and social challenges such as higher unemployment, inequality, exclusion and poverty rates, and a GDP below the EU average; notes that these challenges, combined with the effects of the current crisis, suggest a slower economic recovery in ORs than in other EU regions;
2. Calls on the Commission to systematically take the objectives of Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union into account in its legislative proposals and to come up with a concrete timetable for the support measures outlined in the strategy in collaboration with the Member States and ORs concerned;
3. Reiterates its call to declare 2024 the European Year of Islands;
4. Underlines the key role of cohesion policy in unlocking ORs' potential, in offsetting the impact of their permanent constraints and in reducing economic and social gaps between ORs and the rest of the EU; stresses the need to better account for ORs' specific features in cohesion fund programming, while ensuring they can fully benefit from provisions enabling greater flexibility, namely higher co-financing rates and access to pre-financing; underlines that Member States and ORs are responsible for shaping and implementing their respective development strategies and priorities and for making full use of the potential of EU funds;
5. Stresses the need to factor ORs' specific circumstances fully into delivery of the Green Deal and to tap into their potential to develop their strategic autonomy by diversifying supply chains, and to achieve self-sufficiency from renewables by providing adequate support; highlights the importance of systematically taking into account the vulnerability of ORs in the 'Fit for 55' package and related instruments supporting the green transition, such as the Social Climate Fund, the Modernisation Fund and the Innovation Fund; calls on the Commission, Member States and regional authorities to coordinate their efforts and ensure the best use of available EU funds in order to achieve self-sufficiency from renewable sources; reiterates the potential of ORs for the development of innovative pilot schemes on renewable energies;
6. Underlines that ORs are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss, in particular extreme weather events; welcomes the Commission's plan to provide further support for risk prevention and resilience; underlines, however, that further EU investment is needed in environmental and biodiversity restoration;
7. Regrets that the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve's annual ceiling is not adequate

to respond to emergencies, notably in ORs, which reduces EU support much below the potential aid amount that could be needed, and highlights the need to reconsider the architecture of the EU Solidarity Fund mechanism to render it speedier, more flexible, more agile and therefore better able to respond to regional disasters in ORs;

8. Underlines that a number of ORs experience volcanic activity; calls on the Commission to set up a European scheme, based on the European Network of Observatories and Research Infrastructures for Volcanology (EUROVOLC), to maximise the potential of volcanic regions, and to set up a European research centre located in an OR;
9. Stresses the importance of mainstreaming support for ORs across EU programmes and instruments, in particular the European structural and investment funds (ESIF), the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU) programme; highlights the need to extend the execution deadlines of the RRF to boost economic recovery in ORs; calls on the Commission to ensure that the objectives of national recovery and resilience plans are achieved and that a detailed report with final allocations is submitted to Parliament;
10. Welcomes the Commission's emphasis on addressing economic, social and environmental challenges as well as on implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; underlines the need for more targeted initiatives for ORs that take into account their specific needs as well as the need for additional financial support, in particular to promote poverty reduction, equality, social inclusion, healthcare, access to education, water, the internet and housing, and the protection and restoration of ORs' unique biodiversity to preserve their natural resources and means of subsistence; highlights the importance of further investing in growth and competitiveness, transport, energy, research, education and training, youth mobility and the cultural sector; underlines the importance of taking into account ORs' specificities in the revision of State aid regulations and guidelines, notably by increasing the *de minimis* threshold; welcomes the Commission's plan to propose better coordination and support to improve ORs' research capacity; underlines the importance of the Horizon Europe programme in this regard;
11. Highlights the success of the programme of options specifically relating to remoteness and insularity (POSEI) and calls on the Commission to replicate this instrument for other sectors, such as transport, with additional financial allocations in the post-2027 MFF; deeply regrets that Mayotte's incorporation into the EU in 2014 has still not given rise to an increase in POSEI funding; reiterates the importance of increasing allocations for POSEI agriculture in the future;
12. Calls on the Commission to treat ORs as a unique asset for EU external relations, to make the EU a truly global player and for the projection of the Union's interests and values worldwide in line with the EU's global gateway strategy; welcomes the Commission's objective to strengthen ORs' regional cooperation with neighbouring countries and territories as a way of reinforcing their economic resilience and their food self-sufficiency and calls on the Commission, in coordination with beneficiaries, to facilitate the implementation of projects jointly financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Global Europe and the Decision on the Overseas

Association¹ while including these regions in appropriate consultation mechanisms;

13. Welcomes the Commission's intention to create a portal for all EU funds, programmes and policy initiatives available for the ORs; calls for this portal to be set up immediately; underlines the need to reduce administrative burdens and simplify access to EU funds for ORs.

¹ Council Decision (EU) 2021/1764 of 5 October 2021 on the association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Decision on the Overseas Association, including Greenland). OJ L 355, 7.10.2021, p. 6.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	9.2.2023
Result of final vote	+ : 32 - : 0 0 : 2
Members present for the final vote	Rasmus Andresen, Pietro Bartolo, Olivier Chastel, Andor Deli, Pascal Durand, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Matteo Gazzini, Alexandra Geese, Vlad Gheorghe, Valentino Grant, Francisco Guerreiro, Valérie Hayer, Niclas Herbst, Hervé Juvin, Moritz Körner, Pierre Larrouturou, Camilla Laureti, Janusz Lewandowski, Margarida Marques, Siegfried Mureşan, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Bogdan Rzońca, Nils Ušakovs, Rainer Wieland
Substitutes present for the final vote	Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Jonás Fernández, Fabienne Keller, Petros Kokkalis, Eva Maria Poptcheva, Monika Vana
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Asim Ademov, Alexander Bernhuber, Alicia Homs Ginell, Ivan Štefanec

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

32	+
ECR	Bogdan Rzońca
NI	Andor Deli, Hervé Juvin
PPE	Asim Ademov, Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Alexander Bernhuber, Niclas Herbst, Janusz Lewandowski, Siegfried Mureşan, Ivan Štefanec, Rainer Wieland
Renew	Olivier Chastel, Vlad Gheorghe, Valérie Hayer, Fabienne Keller, Moritz Körner, Eva Maria Poptcheva
S&D	Pietro Bartolo, Pascal Durand, Jonás Fernández, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Alicia Homs Ginel, Pierre Larrourou, Camilla Laureti, Margarida Marques, Nils Ušakovs
The Left	Petros Kokkalis, Dimitrios Papadimoulis
Vers/ALE	Rasmus Andresen, Alexandra Geese, Francisco Guerreiro, Monika Vana

0	-

2	0
ID	Matteo Gazzini, Valentino Grant

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention