

Regional strategies for industrial areas in the European Union

European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2013 on regional strategies for industrial areas in the European Union (2012/2100(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 162 TFEU, which covers the objectives of the European Social Fund and refers, inter alia, to the objective of facilitating adaptation to industrial changes and to changes in production systems,
- having regard to Articles 174 et seq. TFEU, which establish the objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion and define the structural financial instruments for achieving this,
- having regard to Article 176 TFEU, which covers the European Regional Development Fund and refers, inter alia, to the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind and to the conversion of declining industrial regions,
- having regard to Article 173 (Title XVII) TFEU, which covers EU industrial policy and refers, inter alia, to the competitiveness of the Union's industry,
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 11 September 2012 for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council 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 covered by the Common Strategic Framework and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (COM(2012)0496),
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the implementation of the synergies of research and innovation earmarked Funds in Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 concerning the European Regional Development Fund and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development in cities and regions as well as in the Member States and the Union¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2010 on the contribution of the cohesion policy to the achievement of Lisbon and the EU 2020 objectives²,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 June 2010 on Community innovation policy in a changing world³,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 June 2010 on EU 2020⁴,

¹ OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 104.

² OJ C 161 E, 31.5.2011, p. 120.

³ OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 41.

⁴ OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 57.

- having regard to its resolution of 7 October 2010 on EU cohesion and regional policy after 2013¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2011 on an Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era²,
- having regard to the conclusions of the meeting of the Council (3057th Competitiveness Council - Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space) held in Brussels on 10 December 2010 on ‘Industrial policy for the globalisation era’,
- having regard to the Commission’s sixth progress report of 25 June 2009 on ‘Economic and social cohesion – Creative and innovative regions’ (COM(2009)0295),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 30 July 2009 on ‘European Industry In A Changing World - Updated Sectoral Overview 2009’ (SEC(2009)1111),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 23 September 2009, ‘Preparing for our future: Developing a common strategy for key enabling technologies in the EU’ (COM(2009)0512),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth’ (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 October 2010 entitled ‘Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative: Innovation Union’ (COM(2010)0546),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 28 October 2010 entitled ‘An Integrated Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era Putting Competitiveness and Sustainability at Centre Stage’ (COM(2010)0614),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 9 November 2010 entitled ‘Conclusions of the fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: the future of cohesion policy’ (COM(2010)0642),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 October 2011 entitled ‘Industrial Policy: Reinforcing Competitiveness - Member States’ competitiveness performance and policies 2011’ (COM(2011)0642),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 14 March 2012 on ‘Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014 to 2020: 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’ (SWD(2012)0061),
- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 24 April 2012 on ‘The partnership principle in the implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership’ (SWD(2012)0106),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 October 2012 entitled ‘A Stronger European Industry for Growth and Economic Recovery. Industrial Policy Communication

¹ OJ C 371 E, 20.12.2011, p. 39.

² OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 131.

Update' (COM(2012)0582),

- having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document of 10 October 2012 on the European Competitiveness Report (SWD(2012)0299),
 - having regard to the Commission Staff Working Document entitled 'Industrial Performance Scoreboard and Member States' Competitiveness Performance and Policies' (SWD(2012)0298),
 - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) of 26 May 2010 on 'The need to apply an integrated approach to urban regeneration'¹,
 - having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the Commission communication 'An Integrated Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era: Putting Competitiveness and Sustainability at Centre Stage' (CCMI/083 - CESE 808/2011),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development and the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (A7-0145/2013),
- A. whereas the term 'industry' is not clearly defined and may include a wide variety of sectors;
- B. whereas industry is unquestionably one of our main assets at international level, without which the EU would not play such an important role in the global balance of economic forces;
- C. whereas the industrial sector could play a leading role in the economy of the EU, given that the Commission estimates that for every 100 jobs created in industry, between 60 to 200 new jobs can be created in the rest of the economy; whereas, however, between 2008 and 2011, industrial production fell from 20 % to 16 % of the EU's GDP and the number of jobs in the sector fell by 11 %;
- D. whereas the Commission seeks to reverse the decline of industry in the EU and to bring it back from its current level of around 16 % of GDP to as high as 20 % by 2020; whereas industry is the main destination for private and public investment in research, development and innovation;
- E. whereas cohesion policy can help address the structural challenges facing EU industry, and can contribute to achieving the ambitious objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the shift towards a sustainable, low-carbon, energy-efficient and inclusive economy that fosters knowledge and employment;
- F. whereas many old industrialised regions in Europe face similar problems, having had long periods of growth in the past followed by severe economic decline in recent years;
- G. whereas, owing to their economic interdependence and shared features, the component parts of many cross-border regions – for example, traditional mining, steelmaking and textile manufacturing regions – are faced with the same industrial challenges;

¹ OJ C 21, 21.1.2011, p.1

- H. whereas industrial policy tends to focus on the specific day-to-day problems of industry, and its strong impact on regions is therefore often overlooked;
 - I. whereas research has shown that the restructuring of old industrialised regions calls for a broad approach, and administrative obstacles can hinder achieving this;
 - J. whereas Member States, regions and cities in the EU are facing financial constraints; whereas, in particular, areas with an old industrial base are often not well positioned to attract sufficient funds for conversion; whereas EU funding to aid reconversion and restructuring efforts is indispensable for supporting regional and crossborder policy approaches;
 - K. whereas cities are drivers of innovation and sustainable growth, and have the important task of addressing challenges in old industrialised areas;
 - L. whereas new and innovative integrated approaches, also facilitated by appropriate legislative policy frameworks and smart specialisation strategies, are needed to help regions and cities fulfil their innovation potential and refocus their industrial assets in the direction of emerging industries and services and globalised markets;
 - M. whereas reindustrialisation policies fail to take proper account of the cultural and creative industries, which are a key potential source of growth, innovation and jobs, contribute to social cohesion and provide an effective means of combating the current recession;
1. Draws attention to the existing resources made available through cohesion policy and the Structural Funds, capitalising on the European Investment Bank's financial engineering schemes, as well as the national, regional and municipal economic development policies in support of the reconversion of old industrial areas and the reindustrialisation of crisis-stricken industrial areas, the aim being to achieve a modern and sustainable reindustrialisation; regrets, however, that these options do not always address the real region-specific problems and that the structural and investment funding made available is not fully taken up by Member States and regions at a time when industry is being hit hard by the crisis;
 2. Points out that further aid measures to assist old industrialised regions, particularly mono-industrialised regions, need to be put into place so that they can successfully find new development paths focusing on creative and cultural industries and can promote the use of unoccupied sites, which can play a key role in brownfield redevelopment;
 3. Calls for more integrated and systemic approaches to industrial renewal and regional development, and for increased coherence between the different policies at EU, national, regional, interregional and crossborder level, in order to ensure that the potential of the European industrial sector is exploited; stresses the need to create economic zones of regional importance and hi-tech parks on a basis of public-private partnerships, and to contribute to improving the use of local and regional human and economic resources using the latest technologies;
 4. Stresses that the success of such an industrial renewal coupled with regional development will depend on the existence of effective policies in areas such as cohesion policy, economic governance, competitiveness, research and innovation, energy, the digital agenda, sustainable development, the cultural and creative industries, new qualifications and jobs,

etc;

5. Believes that the main challenges for old industrialised regions lie in:
 - the physical regeneration of land;
 - the regeneration of housing and social infrastructure;
 - the renewal of infrastructure, oriented to the needs of new industries;
 - the development of broadband infrastructure, which adds to an area's attractiveness;
 - the need for vocational retraining of jobless workers and lifelong learning efforts to create jobs focusing on high-quality technological education for the workforce, especially young people;
 - the stimulation of crossborder employment, innovation, training, environmental rehabilitation and regional attractiveness strategies;
 - the need to promote entrepreneurship with tailor-made Union employment strategies and to adapt social skills, qualifications and entrepreneurship to the new demands arising as a result of economic, technological, professional and environmental challenges;
 - the sustainable rehabilitation of the areas concerned, with it being guaranteed that green areas are included wherever possible;
 - reinventing of the economic base and investment conditions;
 - the treatment of ecologically-linked problems;
 - financial obstacles and the lack of direct financing possibilities;
 - the building-up of smart specialisation solutions for industrial renewal and economic diversification;
6. Stresses that regional strategies for industrial areas should include, as a focal point, measures to protect land, water and air quality, to safeguard regional and local biodiversity and natural resources, and to clean up land and water, so that environmentally harmful substances do not continue to leak into the natural environment;
7. Believes it is important that strategies for industrial areas include an integrated focus on possible forms of sustainable transport to and from those areas, including raw materials, goods and personnel as well as the necessary infrastructure, be it existing or planned, and that such a focus can help reduce the environmental footprint of industrial and urban areas and ensure that community needs are met, while at the same time safeguarding natural resources and capital and making a positive contribution to human health;
8. Takes the view that as a result of the enlargement process of the EU regional disparities have increased, and thus attention and public awareness have shifted away from old industrialised regions which lack sufficient investment opportunities for concrete regional

development strategies;

9. Calls on the Commission to assess the present situation in old industrialised regions, identify their main challenges, and provide information and guidance for those regions, in order to develop, by means of democratic procedures, regional strategies based on broad partnerships which can help improve those regions' sustainable development prospects by harnessing their endogenous potential;
10. Stresses that strengthening the industrial basis of the economy is necessary for progress in economic growth and job creation, as well as for achieving the EU 2020 goals and targets, and that industry-related assets in terms of cultural, historic and architectural heritage and the expertise available in old industrialised regions can form an irreplaceable basis for this, and should be preserved and adapted to the new needs;
11. Notes that many former industrial areas offer great possibilities for increasing energy efficiency through the application of modern technology and building standards, and that this will benefit both the regional economies concerned and the environment;
12. Reiterates that where old industrialised regions have tried to explore new opportunities for regional development, they have been most successful where they have based these strategies on their past features, their territorial assets, their industrial heritage, and their experiences and capacities;
13. Points out that urban areas play an important role in terms of innovation and sustainable growth, and that reconversion efforts cannot succeed without sufficient investment in this field, since without action on buildings and city transport the EU's targets will not be achieved;
14. Takes the view that the decline in most of the old industrialised regions is partly due to the reliance on monostructures; believes that to base an economy solely on monostructures is counterproductive and that a diversified economy is of the utmost importance as a basis for sustainable growth and job creation;
15. Calls on the Commission to develop political concepts and instruments which combine the Cohesion Fund and the Structural Funds with industrial policy approaches, in order to support the structural transformation from old industrialised regions to modern industrial regions;
16. Believes that regional industrial strategies must be based on an integrated approach, including an employment, training, and education component, aimed at promoting growth sectors capable of creating sustainable local and regional jobs, especially for young people, e.g. in innovative SMEs, as part of the programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME); highlights the special role cities play in developing regional strategies for industrial areas; believes in this framework that cities are central to achieving smart growth; underlines, therefore, the fact that, in particular, cities with an old industrialised base offer an enormous potential, which the EU should explore to the full; calls on the Commission to engage in closer dialogue with the cities concerned with a view to raising the profile of cities as direct partners of the EU;
17. Stresses that support for energy-efficient building renovation, in particular, will help regions to reduce carbon emissions, create local jobs and save consumers money on heating bills;

18. Calls on the Commission to capitalise on synergies between cohesion and industrial policies in order to support competitiveness and growth and assist Member States, regions and cities to find a basis for regional-led industrial development strategies;
19. Believes that no specific blueprint for regional strategies for industrial areas for the EU as a whole exists, and that a local and regional approach is most suitable for developing regional strategies; calls on the Commission to support regional economic research in the context of the initiative Horizon 2020, which enables the development of regionally adjusted strategies for additional old industrialised regions;
20. Highlights the fact that regions' characteristics have to be taken into consideration when planning regional development strategies; in this context and having regard to the model that bottom-up rural (LEADER) development strategies provide for rural areas, considers that bottom-up local development initiatives for urban areas should be encouraged;
21. Calls on the Commission to use the past experiences of urban areas such as Manchester in the UK, Lille in France, Essen and the Ruhr area in Germany and Bilbao in Spain, where EU financing has contributed to the reconversion and restructuring of old industrialised regions, in order to develop future strategies for other regions in the EU;
22. Welcomes the benefits deriving from European Capital of Culture status, as exemplified by Glasgow, Lille, and other cities and urban agglomerations formerly suffering from industrial decline, and maintains that culture and creative activity are key catalysts for urban regeneration and regional attractiveness;
23. Stresses that the sustainable regeneration of old industrialised regions takes decades and is very costly, often exceeding the administrative and financial capacities of in situ public bodies; points to the need, therefore, to develop technical assistance to regional and local authorities and public bodies;
24. Emphasises that the new instrument for 'Integrated Territorial Investment' proposed in Article 99 of the draft Common Provisions Regulation for the new funding period 2014-2020 could offer an opportunity for developing regional strategies beyond administrative borders;
25. Calls on the Member States to avoid over-complex rules for beneficiaries; reiterates that where EU rules exist domestic rules can be eliminated, in order to avoid duplicated or conflicting rules;
26. Calls on the Commission to create a database of existing industry parks and regional activity areas, with a view to identifying the best models that could also be used in other regions and tailoring them to local and regional long-term development strategies, and to provide guidance on how to use funds for assisting in the reconversion process;
27. Takes the view that more support should be given to developing the entrepreneurial spirit among young people, through access to EU funds and business advice;
28. Calls on the Member States to ensure that old industrialised regions can fully benefit from national and European funds, so that the EU can start off a 'new industrial revolution';
29. Stresses the need for the further concentration of cohesion policy support on industrial

reconversion in the regions, in the following areas: business innovation and investment, social inclusion, integrated approaches to urban development, and urban regeneration;

30. Calls on the Member States to support their regions in participating in the ‘smart specialisation’ approach; reiterates that regions need tailor-made sustainable development strategies in order to be successful; notes that in many cases local public bodies cannot acquire the necessary know-how and experience without support from the Commission and the Member States;
31. Takes the view that it is necessary to create industrial areas that will boost the development of cities; maintains that more emphasis should be placed on research activities, innovation and learning, recalling the creative role of universities in this respect; supports the creation of Innovation, Competitiveness and Entrepreneurship networks at regional level with a view to encouraging increased links between universities, businesses and knowledge centres, thus fostering new industrial activities to encourage the development of sectoral specialisation strategies and promote the formation of industrial clusters; calls on the Commission and the Member States concerned to insist on greater transparency in the allocation of means to the relevant stakeholders;
32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States.