

# Towards a stronger partnership with the EU outermost regions

2020/2120(INI) - 14/09/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 614 votes to 20, with 59 abstentions, a resolution on the theme 'towards a stronger partnership with the EU outermost regions'.

Perhaps more than anywhere else, the outermost regions (ORs) are on the front line, confronted by major economic, social, climate and cultural issues. Members consider it necessary to consolidate progress, address vulnerabilities and build on assets to place the ORs at the heart of European action.

## *Systematising a 'European OR reflex'*

Parliament would like to see a 'OR reflex' systematised within the European institutions, based on the adoption of a **cross-cutting and integrated approach** to the reality and challenges of the ORs in all European public policies. It called for the effective application of Article 349 of the TFEU in the various future EU programmes and policies.

The Commission is invited to co-construct a new strategy for and with the ORs, which responds to local realities and needs and is based on respect for specificities, consolidation of achievements and optimisation of existing measures, innovation and the promotion of the ORs as 'territories offering solutions'. Members recommended the definition of a genuine action plan for this new strategic partnership, involving the main stakeholders, and its rapid implementation in order to contribute to economic and social recovery in the ORs.

## *Investing in decent jobs, consolidating solidarity and focusing on youth*

Members recommended making the **fight against poverty, unemployment and social exclusion** the priorities of European solidarity, while investing in education and training, as well as future projects focusing on innovation, particularly social innovation, reskilling and diversification. They advocate protecting health by learning the lessons of the COVID-19 crisis and taking into account the particular situation of the ORs in the face of future events of this nature.

Reaffirming that the strength of youth is a major asset that is often insufficiently exploited, the resolution called on the Commission to consider education as a 'key element' in the development of the ORs, while stressing the need to create specific schemes, in particular through the youth employment initiative. It also stressed the need to strengthen the participation of the ORs in all the actions of the Erasmus + programme.

## *Developing sustainable and fair growth, promoting a green and blue economy, and fostering new professions towards climate neutrality by 2050*

The resolution stressed the importance of encouraging local initiatives by supporting all production companies in the ORs, with particular attention to SMEs and to the **tourism, craft, culture, industry, construction and digital sectors**. It stressed the need for innovative, sustainable and resilient investments.

Parliament recommended, *inter alia*:

- that the particular circumstances and agricultural models of the ORs should be integrated into the strategic plans and the management of the CAP rural development programmes for a more regionalised

and flexible approach. The POSEI scheme must be strengthened to promote economic and social cohesion within the EU, maintain the rural environment and combat depopulation in the ORs;

- creating pilot projects in the ORs focusing on the blue economy and training in order to give these regions a leadership position in the governance of the oceans and to strengthen the specific measures under the Common Fisheries Policy via the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) in order to achieve the objective of food autonomy and to support the blue growth of the ORs

- providing strong support for the tourism sector in the ORs in order to promote recovery and sustainable growth, and to achieve the necessary social, environmental and digital transformation of the sector, particularly in SMEs;

- taking action at all levels to coordinate the investments needed for adaptation, resilience and prevention in the face of the increased frequency and violence of weather phenomena in the ORs that are directly linked to climate change;

- encouraging the emergence of new environment-related professions and support for those working on the ground to protect biodiversity and the environment;

- supporting the ORs in developing a new sustainable economic model, with structuring initiatives to develop the circular economy and promote jobs and new "green" professions.

### ***Adapting to the challenges and opportunities of a globalised world***

The ORs have strong potential and distinctive assets that can benefit the EU as a whole. Europe must rely on the ORs and on their cooperation with their neighbouring countries to promote its democratic values and its environmental and social objectives.

The resolution recommended:

- taking account of the specific characteristics of the ORs, in particular their remoteness from the European continent and the small size of their markets, when implementing its competition policy;

- putting in place a **transport policy** fully adapted to the reality of the ORs in the framework of the ERDF and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), given the existence of significant constraints penalising the ORs due to their remoteness;

- ensuring **digital connectivity** in the ORs in line with the EU's digital agenda as a tool for economic development and equal opportunity;

- ensuring that the ORs benefit fully from the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) concluded between the EU and third countries and apply **differential treatment in favour of OR production** in all EPA and FTA renegotiations in order to ensure a fair balance between protecting sensitive agricultural products and defending the EU's offensive interests;

- mobilising resources under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and additional specific funds to provide greater support to Member States whose ORs are facing strong migratory pressure.