



European Committee
of the Regions



Joint action plan for renewed cooperation on Employment and Social Policies





Joint action plan for renewed cooperation on Employment and Social Policies

between
the European Commission
and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR)

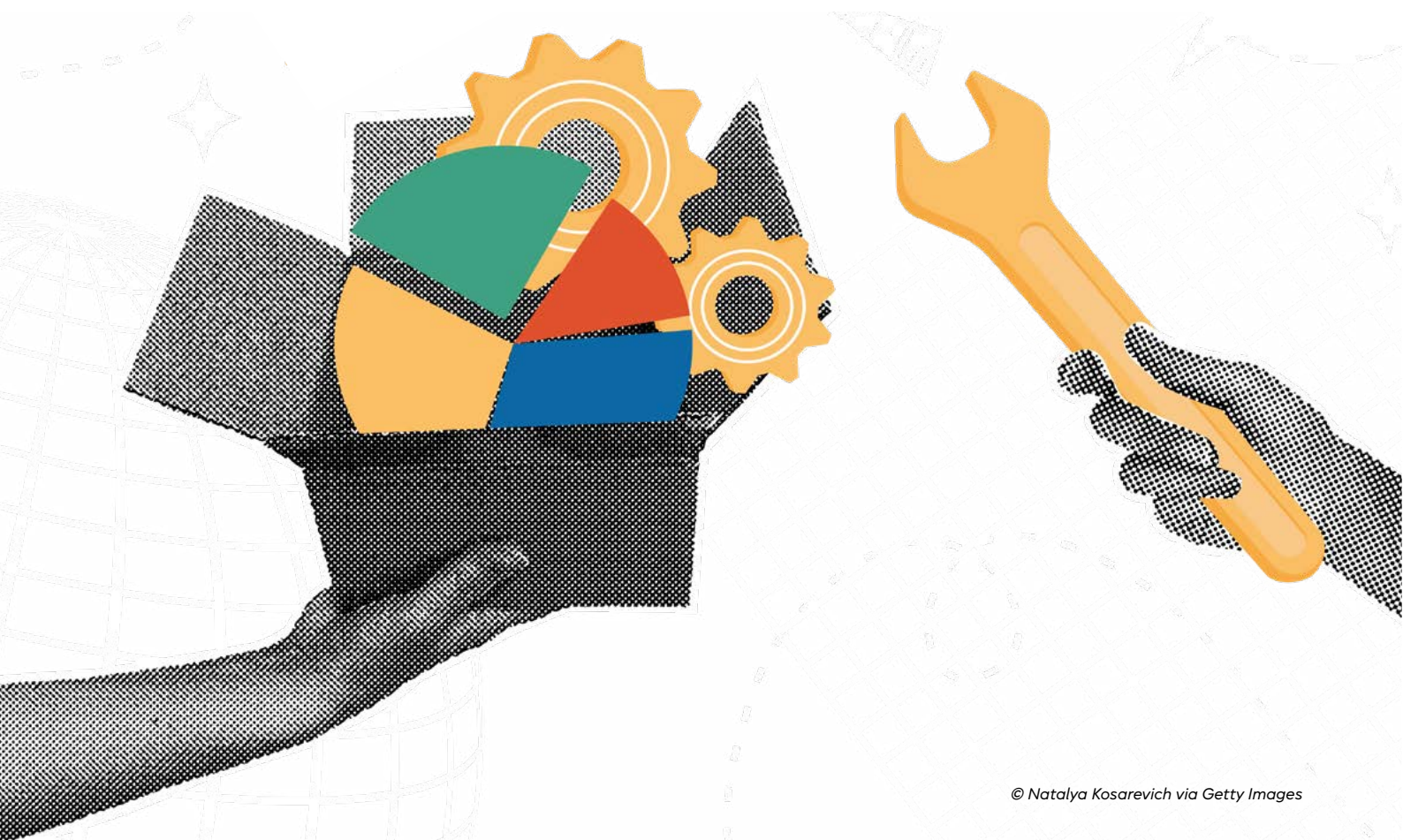
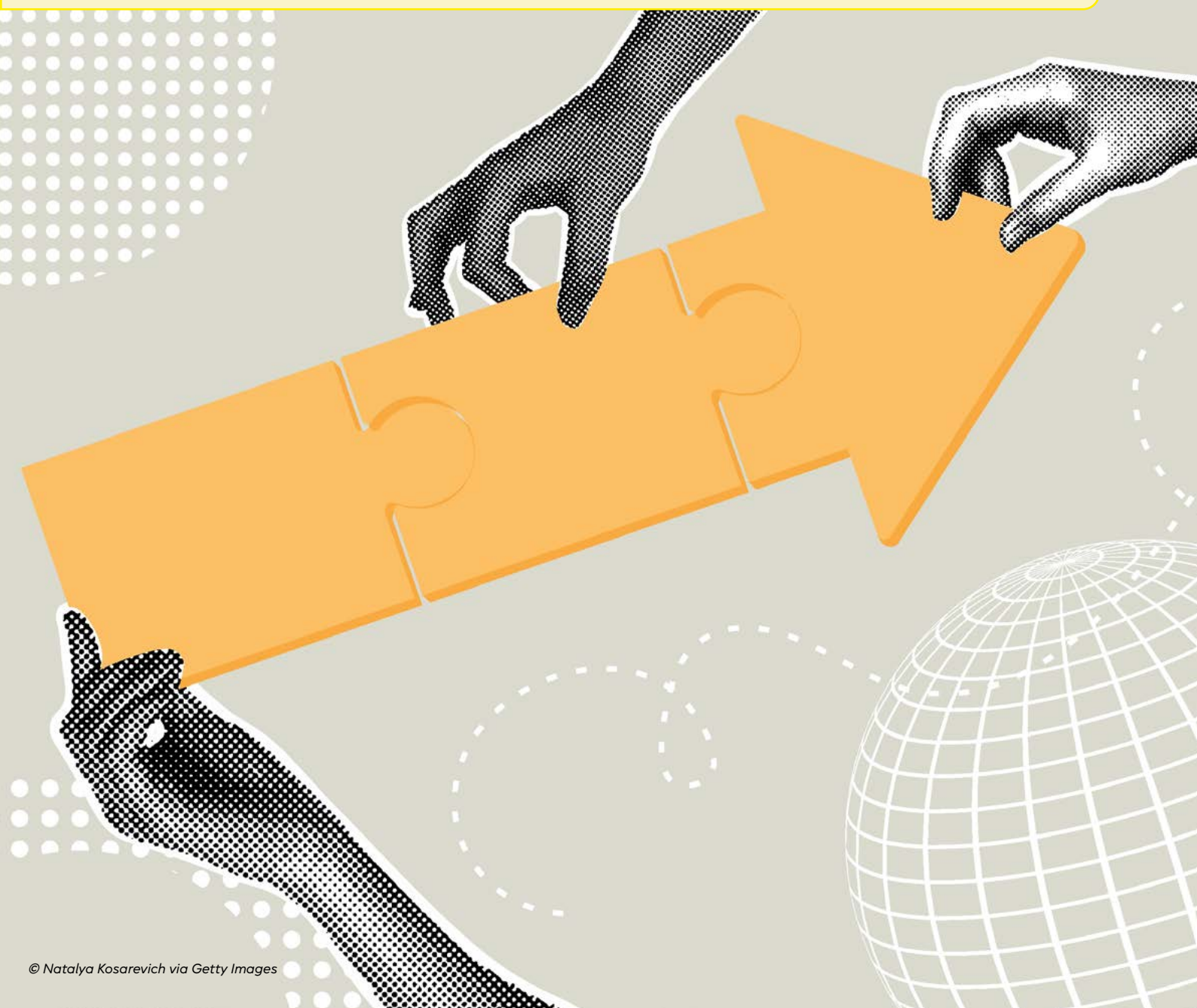


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1.

INTRODUCTION



A strong social Europe lies at the heart of the EU's vision for democratic, cohesive, culturally diverse and prosperous societies. Recent crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's unjustified military aggression against Ukraine, have only underscored the importance of promoting social resilience, inclusion and fairness across all regions and communities. In today's age of fast-transformation and challenge, but also opportunity, economic resilience and adaptability are essential today to ensure that Europeans are equipped to thrive in a rapidly changing labour market as well as against the backdrop of structural challenges, like the green and digital transitions and demographic transformations. This involves not only building inclusive societies by fighting against discrimination and social exclusion, but also by fostering quality jobs, as well as good working and living conditions in all regions of the EU. Additionally, the cost of non-action to combat poverty is significant and multifaceted. The EU needs to move boldly towards reducing – and ultimately – eradicating poverty. By doing so, Europe can support its citizens in leading fulfilling lives, while strengthening Europe's long-term resilience, social cohesion, economic potential and democracy. Investing in people through skills, quality jobs, affordable housing and quality public services is a prerequisite for Europe's competitiveness, resilience and territorial cohesion.

The Protocol on cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)¹ sets the overall framework for continuous long-term cooperation and dialogue, with due respect for each partner's prerogatives. Article 22 of said Protocol states that the European Commission and the CoR agree to "intensify their cooperation in order to increase the synergies between their respective activities, in particular in the context of the Treaty objectives of economic, social and territorial cohesion, and especially in the implementation of cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation". This Article provides for the possibility, within the framework of the Protocol, to develop targeted thematic action plans and other bilateral cooperation arrangements between the European Commission (and/or its services, where appropriate) and the CoR.

The CoR's Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC Commission) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs (DG EMPL) have maintained a long-standing collaborative relationship. Between 2020 and 2025, this partnership was significantly deepened through an enhanced cooperation agreement, consolidating and expanding earlier joint efforts. This joint action plan builds on the 2020 cooperation agreement, reflecting recent developments in Europe and the political priorities for the 2024-2029 mandate. It is aligned with the priorities set out in the EU's strategic agenda², the European Commission's President's Political Guidelines 2024-2029³ and the CoR's resolution on the priorities for 2025-2030⁴.

The implementation of this joint action plan will be reviewed once during each parliamentary term. The review will be carried out jointly by the President of the Committee and the responsible College member. It will be based on the assessment made by the relevant services of the Commission and the Committee, keeping the respective Secretaries-General informed on progress. The review will assess progress in implementing the objectives and activities agreed under this joint action plan and identify, where appropriate, any follow-up actions or priorities for the remainder of the parliamentary term.

1 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32024Y02478>

2 https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/yxrc05pz/sn02167en24_web.pdf

3 https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

4 RESOL-VIII/004, available at: <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/priorities-2025-2030>

2.

KEY THEMES FOR A CLOSER COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CoR AND DG EMPL



Intensified cooperation will focus on areas where the CoR can provide a clear added value and where the territorial dimension is strongest, as set out in this Joint action plan for renewed cooperation. This cooperation will be built upon the existing practices already in place with the previous cooperation agreement. The CoR, particularly its SEDEC Commission, will contribute by mobilising its members and relevant political networks, providing insights into the regional and local perspectives for these key themes, facilitating political dialogue and multilevel governance, showcasing regional success stories and best practices, and disseminating information on EU funding opportunities and initiatives. While cooperation in other fields remains possible, priority should be given to the following key areas:

2.1 The European Pillar of Social Rights

Since its proclamation at the Gothenburg Social Summit in 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights has acted as a catalyst in making Europe a better place to live and work. Its 20 principles are our guide towards a Europe that is fair, inclusive and full of opportunity. Structured around three chapters – equal opportunities, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion – the Pillar is a permanent reminder of the kind of Europe we want to build.

The 2021 Pillar Action Plan sought to bring the 20 principles to life by setting far-reaching measures at EU, national, regional and local level reinforcing the EU social dimension. The 2026 Commission Communication on the Pillar renewed EU's commitment to Social Europe and set out clear priorities for further action where more needs to be done at all levels.

The successful implementation of the EU's employment and social agenda hinges on strong multi-level governance and close partnership with local and regional authorities (LRAs). LRAs play a critical role not only in translating EU priorities into tangible outcomes, but also in feeding back experience, identifying emerging needs and promoting best practices. Given the uneven impact of multiple overlapping challenges – from economic disparities to demographic shifts – LRAs are uniquely positioned to design, adapt, and implement tailored policies that strengthen social fairness, labour market resilience, and territorial cohesion. Their proximity to citizens and businesses makes them critical partners. It is therefore necessary to actively involve LRAs, notably, through:

- The CoR's involvement and participation in the **European Skills Intelligence Observatory**, which aims at strengthening the evidence base and supporting policy monitoring, including in the area of fair green and digital transition;
- The CoR's involvement and participation in the **Energy Poverty Advisory Hub**, which helps local authorities design and implement measures against energy poverty by collecting knowledge, sharing good practices and offering technical assistance.
- Cooperation on the **European Care Strategy**, strengthening the role of LRAs in the delivery of quality, accessible and affordable care services, with particular attention to early childhood education and care, long-term care, support for both formal and informal carers with specific attention to the gender care gap, and territorial inequalities in access to care services as well as enhancing investments into care services and care workforce. Cooperation in this area may be further strengthened in the context of the forthcoming European Care Deal;
- Closer cooperation in the field of social economy. The mid-term review of the **Social Economy Action Plan** showed both strong positive developments and scope for further reinforcing of the social economy ecosystem across Member States. The mid-term review also finds that there is untapped potential for social economy at regional and municipal levels. Closer cooperation might explore activities in the fields of social inclusion, job creation, housing, care, energy communities, other social services, and social innovation. The CoR will contribute to the exchange of good practices and inform its members of the latest developments in the sector, together with DG EMPL. These could ultimately contribute to the development of regional and local strategies in the area;
- Engaging in discussions on other key topics, such as quality jobs, **working conditions, coordination of social security systems, social protection of workers and self-employed, digitalisation of social services and benefits and integrated approaches to ensuring well-being in old age**, as well as other aspects relevant to tackle the impacts of the demographic changes;

2.2 Areas related to social policy

2.2.1 Poverty and the new European Anti-Poverty Strategy

The third headline target of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan calls for reducing, by 2030, the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children. Furthermore, in the 2025 State of the Union speech, President von der Leyen announced that the European Anti-Poverty Strategy will set out a plan to help eradicate poverty in the EU by the year 2050. The social package, adopted on 6 May 2026, includes the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, a Communication on Breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee, a proposal for a Council Recommendation on fighting housing exclusion and a Communication enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities until 2030.

The CoR, responding to a request from the Commission, adopted the outlook opinion on an “EU Anti-Poverty Strategy”⁵ in October 2025, acknowledging that poverty is a violation of human rights, that it affects a large portion of the EU population and called for a series of measures to help fight against it.

Following up on the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, DG EMPL and the SEDEC Commission will explore options of closer cooperation, such as:

- Promoting the **implementation of the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy** at regional and local levels, including by:
 - Promoting and disseminating the Principles for Effective Anti-Poverty Policies among its regional and local authority networks to support the implementation of effective anti-poverty policy frameworks across all governance levels. This could include organising at least one joint webinar for this purpose, potentially with the help of the EU Local Councilors Network.
 - Promoting the participation of persons with lived experience of poverty in the design, implementation and monitoring of local and regional policies. This could include organising at least one joint training for regional and local authorities for this purpose.
 - Working together on the “EU Social Inclusion Award” for innovative practices tackling and preventing poverty in cities and municipalities with strong potential for scaling up, and foster peer learning by cities and municipalities.
- Organising **communication campaigns** showcasing the collaboration’s results:
 - Utilising the European Week of Regions and Cities as a platform to inform stakeholders of the anti-poverty policy progress, when possible and in agreement with DG REGIO.
 - Promoting the Coalition Against Poverty with the view to engage companies and philanthropies across EU Member States at local and regional level.
 - Organising study visits and seminars focused on addressing poverty in EU Member States (annually or bi-annually), hosted by a local or regional authority, potentially with the help of the EU Local Councilors Network.
 - Organising seminars or trainings on how to best utilise local, regional, national and EU resources in the fight against poverty, with the engagement of other key stakeholders.
- Cooperating on improving **access to social services**, building on the CoR opinion on “Addressing territorial inequalities by improving access to social services”,⁶ with a focus on ensuring quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care, healthcare and long-term care, social inclusion services, education, housing, culture and other important public services across all territories, particularly in rural, remote and disadvantaged regions. This also includes supporting stronger coordination between services at local level and better outreach to the most vulnerable.
- Monitoring, evaluating and assessing the potential follow-up of the **zero long-term unemployment pilot projects**. With a budget of EUR 23 million, 10 projects⁷ are being funded until 2028. Building on the evaluation of the projects, this would consist of supporting the dissemination of results and scaling successful models across EU regions and municipalities;
- Supporting the transfer and scaling up of **social innovations** as an effective tool to tackle poverty.
- Mainstreaming anti-poverty considerations throughout the work of the Committee of the Regions, making sure to take into account in its opinions the impact of policies on the lower-income households, and, where relevant, making use of and/or promoting distributional impact assessments.

5 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-1106-2025>

6 <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-3099-2024>

7 <https://socialinnovationplus.eu/app/uploads/2026/03/List-of-signed-10-LTU-GAs.pdf>

2.2.2 Breaking the cycle of child poverty and strengthening the European Child Guarantee

The CoR has been a great proponent of the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee since its inception and has adopted several opinions on the topic ("The EU strategy on the rights of the child and the European child guarantee"⁸, "Improving the social inclusion of children by implementing the European Child Guarantee at local and regional level"⁹, "Empowering local and regional authorities in integrated child protection systems"¹⁰ which informed the Commission Recommendation on integrated child protection¹¹). In 2026, the CoR adopted two opinions stemming from referrals of the Cyprus Presidency, on "Child wellbeing and child benefits – mapping child benefit systems across EU Member States"¹², and on "The protection of youth and minors in the digital sphere"¹³, which served to inform the Council Conclusions on the topic.

The Commission Communication on Breaking the cycle of child poverty – strengthening the European Child Guarantee, adopted on 6 May 2026, aims to step up efforts in the implementation of the Guarantee and the fight against child poverty. To achieve this, the Communication focuses on three pillars: (1) securing parents' access to quality jobs and robust social safety nets; (2) ensuring that all vulnerable children have access to the comprehensive and tailored protection and support they need to reach their full potential; and (3) boosting investment and bringing together partners, including LRAs, to invest in children. The Communication stressed among others that this Joint Action with the CoR will "support the fight against child poverty".

Building on the Committee of the Regions' recent opinions, this new action plan should foster stronger involvement of local and regional authorities (LRAs) in implementing the European Child Guarantee and tackling child poverty."In particular with the CoR, and building on its latest opinions, **stronger involvement of LRAs** in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee and the fight against child poverty should be fostered under this new action plan. Areas of focus should include access of children in need to the key services and goods covered by the European Child Guarantee, as well as families' access to adequate resources, through parents' labour market participation and robust social safety nets across territories.

One concrete initiative could be the set-up of a **CoR working group of local practitioners**. The working group could monitor progress in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee and the fight against child poverty on the ground. It could also undertake awareness-raising activities among LRAs, foster exchange of experiences, promote good practices to tackle local challenges, support LRAs in scaling them up through capacity building and in accessing funding opportunities. The working group could focus on different aspects of the fight against child poverty with specific relevance to the local level, including support for parents, as well as in-cash and in-kind benefits for children in need. Dedicated actions could be undertaken to make take-up of support easier for families, and to develop individualised support and mentoring programmes for vulnerable children and young people, from childhood to adulthood, through closer collaboration between schools, social workers and community leaders at local level.

2.2.3 Homelessness and social housing

Following the Lisbon Declaration in 2021, its signatories – the European Commission, the European Parliament, the CoR and the EESC, civil society organisations, social partners and cities – launched the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness¹⁴ and agreed to work towards specific objectives regarding the prevention and fight against homelessness. The work of the Platform is organised around four work strands: strengthen data and evidence on homelessness, mutual learning activities of the platform, promoting access to EU funds and other sources of finance and mainstreaming homelessness in relevant policy areas. DG EMPL is responsible for the Platform's secretariat. The CoR is represented in the Platform.

8 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-2601-2021>

9 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-4650-2023>

10 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-0219-2024>

11 [C\(2024\) 2680 final](#)

12 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-0189-2026>

13 <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-4112-2025>

14 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3044

The proposal for a Council Recommendation on fighting housing exclusion aims to support Member States in preventing and addressing housing exclusion of vulnerable persons in, or at-risk of, precarious housing situations and of homeless persons. It is structured around five main building blocks: early identification of housing exclusion risks; prevention of housing loss; person-centred and housing-led support for people experiencing homelessness; improving access to social and affordable housing and mobilising financing; and stronger governance, monitoring and evaluation.

Going forward, DG EMPL and the SEDEC Commission should continue the work within the Platform and, in this framework, commit to facilitating \ **dedicated activities for the benefit of regions and cities interested in tackling this issue**. Events on how to utilise EU funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and InvestEU for social and affordable housing should also be promoted.

DG EMPL and the SEDEC Commission will cooperate further on social and affordable housing and measures to fight homelessness and housing exclusion, including by **exchanging on person-centred, integrated and housing-led approaches** effectively addressing the needs of vulnerable groups such as, among others, children and young people in need, low-income households, persons with disabilities and older people with long-term care needs with focus on adapted and innovative housing arrangements.

DG EMPL will contribute to the implementation of the European Affordable Housing Plan, adopted in December 2025, and coordinated by the Housing Task Force in DG ENER. In particular, DG EMPL intends to support interested Member States in increasing their social housing stock and other forms of inclusive housing (for example, by leveraging social economy housing models such as housing co-operatives, limited-profit housing associations and community land trusts). Given the central role of cities and regions in the domain of housing, the **input from and cooperation with the CoR** will be important for this work.

2.2.4 The Social Climate Fund (SCF)

The SCF was established as an accompanying measure to the new Emissions Trading System for buildings, road transport and additional sectors (ETS2), with the objective of pursuing climate and social objectives within the same instrument. –The SCF aims to mitigate the social and economic impact of the climate transition on vulnerable households, vulnerable transport users and vulnerable micro-enterprises, defined with reference to energy and/or transport poverty.

The Fund makes available EUR 65 billion, financed from the ETS revenues (mainly ETS2), over the period 2026–2032, well ahead of the start of ETS2 in 2028 (until then, SCF funding will come from revenues from the existing ETS1). Together with a mandatory contribution from the Member States amounting at minimum 25% of the costs under their Social Climate Plans, which will be integrated into the NRP Plans from 2028 onwards, the Fund aims to mobilise at least EUR 86.7 billion.

Although the Social Climate Plans are drafted at national level (one plan for each Member State) and endorsed by the Commission, it is critical that they are **designed in coordination with stakeholders including LRAs, as part of the mandatory public consultation**. A summary of the consultation activities and events, as well as an explanation of how stakeholders feedback and inputs has been incorporated, must be included in the Plans, and is part of Commission assessment. This requirement reflects the fact that implementation can be delegated at the local level to towns, cities or regions, for the roll-out of investments which could for example promote and improve sustainable public transport or improve energy efficiency of social housing.

LRAs may have administrative data, knowledge and experience working on the ground on energy/transport poverty and vulnerability, which is important in underpinning the analysis and the design of the Plans, starting from the identification of target groups. In this respect, DG EMPL, in cooperation with DG CLIMA as appropriate, promote the close engagement in **Member States of LRAs when designing and also when implementing the Social Climate Plans**. Such engagement could be further promoted through closer cooperation between CoR and DG EMPL, DG CLIMA.

The CoR's Commission for Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE) will continue to work with its members on the implementation of the Plans at local level, including monitoring implementation issues and the fit of the Plan's measures with local needs.

2.3 Areas related to employment policy

2.3.1 Quality jobs

On 4 December 2025, the European Commission adopted the Quality Jobs Roadmap ('the Roadmap') aiming to foster high-quality employment in the EU. The Roadmap focuses on the areas where EU action can make the greatest difference, namely creating and maintaining quality jobs in the EU, modernisation and fairness in the world of work. The Roadmap also emphasises key enabling factors in a business-friendly environment such as the enforcement of existing social rights, social dialogue and collective bargaining, social investment and quality services across regions.

The Roadmap highlights the central role of regions and local communities in promoting quality employment supporting long-term economic participation and strengthening territorial, economic and social cohesion. It also underlines that promoting quality jobs in the public services sector supports regional attractiveness and development, allowing individuals to enjoy a "right to stay" and thrive in their local communities.

The CoR supports the importance of fostering high-quality jobs across the EU, as they are a tool for keeping EU competitiveness at a top level, encourage cohesion, contribute towards the "freedom to remain" and are a pillar for growth for all EU regions. The CoR is a staunch supporter of robust employment across the EU, having adopted a multitude of opinions on the topic ("Posting of workers"¹⁵, "transparent and predictable working conditions in the EU"¹⁶, "work-life balance for parents and carers"¹⁷, "adequate minimum wages"¹⁸, "future plan for care workers and care services"¹⁹, "improving working conditions in platform work"²⁰ etc).

The scope of cooperation between DG EMPL and CoR can be expanded to the following:

- The CoR can **provide local perspectives and feedback on job policies**, helping spread **best practices** across various regions in the EU aiming at presenting evidence on the situation on the ground related to place-based labour market disparities, rural and cross-border realities, social infrastructure, regional skills ecosystems, quality employment in essential local services (such as health, care, education, public transport, construction, tourism), socially responsible public procurement, and territorial monitoring mechanisms;
- DG EMPL and the CoR can collaborate to facilitate the **promotion of funding opportunities** aimed at improving employment through the ESF, by raising awareness and participating in dedicated events and seminars including in EU regions;
- The CoR can contribute to the implementation of the Roadmap in **areas relevant to the regional and local context**, through its network of Regional Hubs;
- CoR members can identify issues not directly related with the implementation of the Roadmap, which nevertheless impact the level of quality of employment in their regions (such as commuting difficulties, access to green spaces, community support programmes or lack thereof, etc);
- LRAs can be enablers for quality jobs, by applying the policies described in it themselves and by using their leverage to influence other large employers in the EU. LRAs are one of the largest employers in the EU, as they employ around 12 million workers in their public services provision. Quality services are a key enabler for employment and labour market transitions. By providing public services like accessible education and vocational training, social care, healthcare, transport and emergency services, LRAs empower millions of workers to engage in paid work and career advancement.;
- The CoR can **help monitoring progress** of quality jobs at regional and local level.

¹⁵ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-2881-2016>

¹⁶ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-1129-2018>

¹⁷ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-3138-2017>

¹⁸ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-5859-2020>

¹⁹ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-5862-2020>

²⁰ <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-0155-2022>

2.3.2 Fair Labour Mobility

On 15 September 2026, the European Commission adopted the Fair Labour Mobility Package. It consists of a proposal for a Regulation on a European Social Security Pass, a proposal for a Regulation strengthening the European Labour Authority (ELA) and the Skills Portability Initiative. The CoR can assist in the following ways:

- Raising awareness about workers' rights and obligations, **organising informational campaigns and workshops** at the regional level;
- Raise awareness on the European Health Insurance Card for when citizens need unplanned care in another country.
- **Advising on adapting national and regional regulations** to better align with the principles of fair labour mobility, ensuring consistency across Europe;
- **Monitoring the implementation and the impact of the package** locally, providing feedback to Commission to refine and improve labour mobility measures;
- **Identify issues** related to the mobility of cross-border workers in cooperation with ELA and the CoR European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

2.4 European Social Fund+ (ESF+)

Under 2021-2027, the ESF is the EU's main fund for investments in people. Given the multi-faceted challenges that Europe faces, investing in people will remain key. The EU should continue supporting the thematic areas of employment, education and skills and social inclusion, as well as addressing challenges related to the digital and green transitions and reducing inequalities. This should be done through a strong local and regional dimension, both in terms of territorial governance and on-the-ground implementation, and in close synergy with other policy areas.

On 16 July 2025, the Commission adopted its proposal for the National and Regional Partnership Plans that will bring together all EU funds implemented by Member States and regions, in support of European priorities. The new partnership plans will give additional opportunities to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, supporting quality employment, skills and social inclusion across all Member States, regions and sectors. As part of the plans, the European Social Fund will contribute to promote equal opportunities for all, to support strong social safety nets, foster social inclusion, intergenerational fairness and fight poverty. Article 6 of the proposal for the NRP Regulation calls for reinforced partnership working with regions and municipalities, as well as a closer cooperation with social partners, and civil society organisations.

The CoR can bring added-value in the implementation of the NRPP social measures (2028-2034) and ESF+ (2021-2027) as follows:

- **Promote dialogue** between LRAs and the Commission to ensure that the ESF focuses on specific, regional and local needs of communities across Europe;
- **Provide expertise and feedback** on the design and implementation of 2021-2027 ESF+ programmes and future social measures within the NRPPs, drawing on practical experience from regions and cities;
- Encourage through its functions the **exchange of best practices and innovative solutions** among regions;
- **Monitoring the progress** of ESF initiatives with special focus to the local and regional level.

2.5 Union of Skills

Skills, labour mobility and workforce transformation lie at the centre of Europe's competitiveness, resilience and social cohesion agenda. Skills remain a key cross-cutting priority for the SEDEC Commission, building on the previous cooperation between DG EMPL and the CoR on the Skills Agenda, its strong engagement throughout the European Year of Skills, and the CoR's opinion on the "Union of skills"²¹. These all highlighted the need for a stronger territorial dimension in EU skills policy and reaffirmed the essential role of LRAs in its design and implementation.

Against this background, DG EMPL and the CoR commit to the full implementation of the Union of Skills, including at the local and regional level, ensuring that cities and regions are recognised not only

21 <https://www.cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions/cdr-1105-2025>

as implementers, but also as co-designers of policies related to skills development, lifelong learning, vocational education and training (VET), adult learning, apprenticeships, and skills mobility. This requires systematically integrating place-based challenges, such as rural and regional skills shortages, teacher and trainer deficits, industrial and clean or digital transition, demographic decline and talent attraction or retention, into EU policy design, while strengthening multilevel governance and ensuring greater coherence between European, national, regional and local strategies.

Further fruitful cooperation can be achieved through the following actions:

- Setting actions to strengthen skills development at the local and regional level and support LRAs;
- **Promoting the Pact for Skills**, supporting regions and cities in building – or joining existing – large-scale skills partnerships with industry, social partners, training providers and SMEs for upskilling and reskilling;
- Collaborating on the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA)**. CoR and EAfA could further work on one of the priorities of the EAfAs “Mobilising local and regional authorities as catalysts for apprenticeships within the local business environment.” One of the primary goals of the network will be to raise awareness of the potential that cities must support apprenticeships. Ultimately, through the network, cities will be able to learn from each other, collaborate, develop tools, share good practices and provide and receive technical and policy assistance;
- **Cooperating on the EU Skills Academies**, supporting stronger participation of LRAs in sectoral Skills Academies for strategic sectors;
- **Supporting regional skills intelligence and forecasting**, including drawing upon the European Skills Intelligence Observatory, to build stronger links with territorial development strategies.
- Helping LRAs engage in the **European Skills Guarantee pilot** to support workers at risk of unemployment;
- Ensuring that LRAs play a central role in the **EU Talent Pool, Talent Partnerships and the “Choose Europe” initiative** to retain global research talent within regional innovation ecosystems;
- Contributing to the **European VET Strategy**, ensuring stronger territorial ownership, better alignment between VET systems and local labour market needs, and support for Centres of Vocational Excellence and regional innovation ecosystems;
- Preparing and adopting CoR opinions on relevant initiatives that contribute to the full implementation of the Union of Skills.

3.

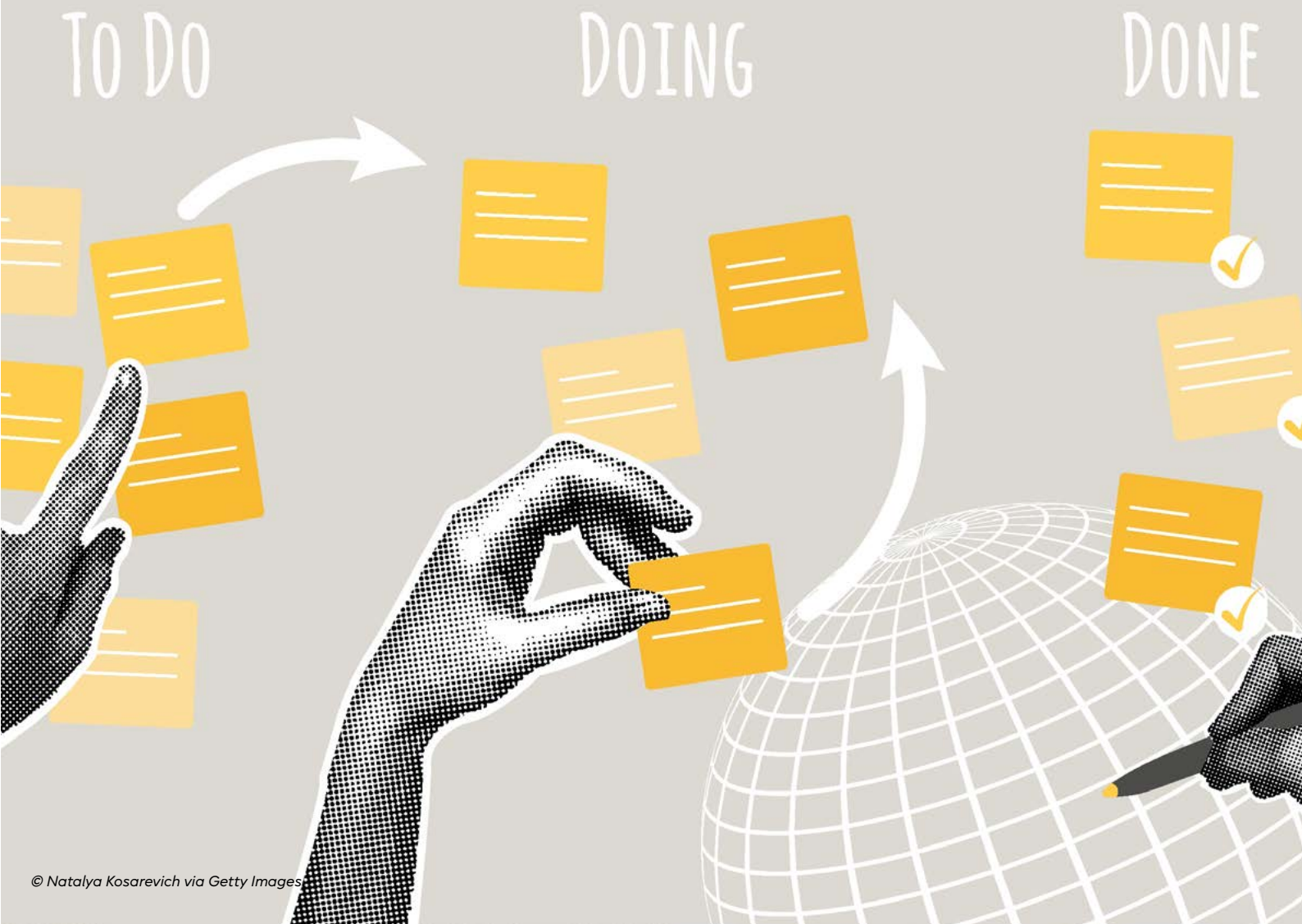
OTHER POLICY AREAS AND COOPERATION POSSIBILITIES



To deliver an enhanced cooperation between the CoR and DG EMPL the following additional measures can be envisaged:

- Regular political and policy dialogue at the CoR plenary and SEDEC Commission meetings;
- Participation of CoR members and rapporteurs in conferences and events organised by the DG EMPL where the local and regional perspective brings value added;
- Participation of DG EMPL officials in SEDEC Commission meetings to present and inform SEDEC Commission members on upcoming DG EMPL proposals;
- Awareness raising for CoR members about available EU funding and policy support to show how the EU can help regions and cities in the green and digital transitions;
- Exploring joint communication measures, where appropriate;
- DG EMPL can use the CoR monitoring platform (like the Regional Hubs network and the Territorial Impact Assessment) in the creation of new policy proposals or for assessing existing ones, pending on availability and resources of the said platforms;

4. CONCLUSION



In signing this joint action plan for renewed cooperation, we reaffirm our commitment to a social Europe that works for all, and we underscore the central role of LRAs in advancing the social agenda through effective multilevel governance. Recognising that challenges like the green and digital transitions, demographic shifts and persistent inequalities demand tailored, place-based solutions, this partnership commits to deepening collaboration through structured dialogue, joint initiatives, and the systematic involvement of LRAs in policy design and delivery.

Signed in Brussels, Belgium, on 13 October 2026

Roxana Mînzatu

European Commission
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Heike Raab

Chair of the
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Education, Employment,
Research and Culture





**European Committee
of the Regions**

Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 452 million Europeans.

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