European Parliament
2024-2029

TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2025)0186

Role of cohesion policy in supporting the just transition

European Parliament resolution of 10 September 2025 on the role of cohesion policy in supporting the just transition (2024/2121(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union,

– having regard to Articles 4, 9, 151, 153, 162, 174 to 178 and 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility[1],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/691 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1309/2013[2],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund[3],

– 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[4],

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1 OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj.
2 OJ L 153, 3.5.2021, p. 48, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/691/oj.
3 OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1056/oj.
4 OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 21, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj.

– 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[1],

– 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 (Common Provisions Regulation)[2],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law')[3], including a legal objective for the EU to reach climate neutrality by 2050, setting the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 compared to 1990 levels,

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1735 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 on establishing a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's net-zero technology manufacturing ecosystem and amending Regulation (EU) 2018/1724[4],

– having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change[5],

– having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments[6],

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1 OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1058/oj.
2 OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj.
3 OJ L 243, 9.7.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1119/oj.
4 OJ L, 2024/1735, 28.6.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1735/oj.
5 OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 26.
6 OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 125.

– having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2022 on EU islands and cohesion policy: current situation and future challenges[1],

– having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report[2],

– having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2023 on job creation – the just transition and impact investments[3],

– having regard to its resolution of 23 November 2023 on harnessing talent in Europe's regions[4] ,

– having regard to its resolution of 12 December 2023 on reshaping the future framework of EU structural funds to support regions particularly affected by challenges related to the automotive, green and digital transitions[5] ,

– having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2024 on cohesion policy 2014-2020 - implementation and outcomes in the Member States[6],

– having regard to the Paris Agreement, adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015,

– having regard to the Territorial Agenda 2030 – A future for all places, adopted at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and/or territorial cohesion on 1 December 2020,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 4 March 2021 on the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (COM(2021)0102),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 14 July 2021 entitled '"Fit for 55": delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality' (COM(2021)0550),

– having regard to the Commission report of February 2024 entitled 'Forging a sustainable future together – Cohesion for a competitive and inclusive Europe: report of the High-Level Group on the Future of Cohesion Policy',

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1 OJ C 493, 27.12.2022, p. 48.
2 OJ C 125, 5.4.2023, p. 100.
3 OJ C, C/2024/4224, 24.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4224/oj.
4 OJ C, C/2024/4225, 24.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4225/oj.
5 OJ C, C/2024/4166, 2.8.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4166/oj.
6 OJ C, C/2024/6562, 12.11.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/6562/oj.

– having regard to the Commission communication of 27 March 2024 on the 9th Cohesion Report (COM(2024)0149),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 26 February 2025 entitled ‘The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation’ (COM(2025)0085),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2025 entitled ‘The Union of Skills’ (COM(2025)0090),

– having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 8 October 2024 entitled ‘A Just Transition for all EU regions’[1],

– having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 21 November 2024 entitled ‘A renewed Cohesion Policy post 2027 that leaves no one behind’[2],

– having regard to the report by Enrico Letta of 17 April 2024 entitled ‘Much more than a market – Speed, Security, Solidarity: Empowering the single market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU citizens’,

– having regard to the report by Mario Draghi of 9 September 2024 entitled ‘The future of European competitiveness’,

– having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A10-0137/2025),

A. whereas the ambitious goal of transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050 at the latest has the potential to generate substantial economic, environmental and social benefits, including the creation of new industries, job opportunities and improved quality of life; whereas, at the same time, this transition may also exacerbate existing disparities between regions, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations due to socio-economic factors hampering their ability to benefit from the transition, and create new vulnerabilities, particularly in regions that are highly dependent on carbon-intensive industries, including the coal regions;

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1 OJ C, C/2024/7058, 4.12.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/7058/oj.

2 OJ C, C/2025/285, 24.1.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/285/oj.

B. whereas the regions of the EU vary considerably in terms of socio-economic characteristics, with varying levels of development, infrastructure, demographic trends and labour market conditions, and it is evident that there is no one-size-fits-all solution capable of adequately addressing their diverse needs; whereas less developed regions tend to suffer more from the transition, compared to more developed regions;

C. whereas disparities remain in the speed of the digital transition and connectivity across Europe, especially in rural and remote areas; whereas many affected regions lack basic infrastructure and essential services, which makes it difficult for them to attract productive investment that leads to sustainable economic recovery; whereas more investment is needed to accelerate the shift to sustainable and smart mobility and to modernise and diversify the infrastructure systems in order to enhance accessibility, promote innovation and support the transition to a greener economy; whereas cohesion policy should play a strategic role in bridging these gaps, promoting territorial cohesion and ensuring no region is left behind in the transition;

D. whereas many of the poorest and most vulnerable regions are located in the eastern part of the EU; whereas the war in Ukraine has an additional negative impact on these regions;

E. whereas the physical disconnection and isolation of islands from the mainland constitutes a permanent structural disadvantage that affects multiple aspects of economic and social life, including access to the labour market, education, healthcare, mobility and public services; whereas the limited territory of islands significantly restricts opportunities for professional upskilling and reskilling, thereby limiting workers’ ability to adapt to structural changes or sectoral shifts, such as those driven by the green and digital transitions; whereas, in many cases, this lack of alternatives forces workers to leave their home regions in order to access employment opportunities elsewhere, effectively undermining their ‘right to stay’ and contributing to depopulation and brain drain in insular territories;

F. whereas the EU Just Transition Fund (JTF) is, and should continue to be, an important tool in ensuring people living in territories affected by the shift to climate neutrality are not left behind and in contributing to the objective of enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition; whereas the absorption rates remain too low at this stage of the programming period;

G. whereas the transition to a low-carbon economy, the global climate crisis and environmental pollution, with their impact on food, education and health, also spell a crisis for children’s rights in the many different regions of the EU, and effective, meaningful measures should be taken to ensure that children and future generations grow up with dignity and are equipped for the skilled labour market of tomorrow;

H. whereas recommendations to Member States for an overall, adequately resourced strategy to combat poverty and, in particular, family and child poverty in the EU, as well as policies and action for its implementation, promote a deepening of the internal market and progress in achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion, and support the Commission’s goal for a competitive and inclusive Europe of diverse regions;

I. whereas Europe is currently experiencing labour and skills shortages, hampering the Union’s competitiveness, as identified by the Draghi and Letta reports; whereas strategic decentralisation of industrial and technological development and investment to regions affected by the transition can help to address such shortages, but requires sufficient investment in the accompanying public services and infrastructure such as housing, education and transport;

J. whereas many of the industries hit the hardest by decarbonisation faced unfavourable working conditions and a dependency on seasonal workers; whereas the green and digital transitions must go hand in hand with social justice; whereas just transition should help in addressing workplace discrimination, ensuring decent and quality working conditions, raising labour standards and ensuring effective safety nets and protection mechanisms for the workers whose jobs are affected;

K. whereas tourism is a key sector of the EU’s economy, directly and indirectly contributing to over 10 % of the EU’s GDP, and plays a vital role in enhancing competitiveness, social well-being and sustainable job creation, particularly in regions heavily reliant on tourism; whereas tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to territorial cohesion, particularly in remote, rural, coastal, outermost and island regions, and can support economic diversification and just transition in areas facing structural challenges, population decline, or dependency on carbon-intensive industries; whereas the EU’s tourism industry, largely composed of 2,3 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employs approximately 12,3 million people and represents a major economic activity with strong multiplier effects across various sectors; whereas cohesion policy should support sustainable tourism strategies as part of the just transition, fostering resilience, innovation and green and digital transformation in the tourism sector, while promoting inclusive growth and preserving cultural and natural heritage;

L. whereas the EU, unlike its main competitors, is a world leader in emissions reduction, while tackling many challenges triggered by the complex global geopolitical and economic context;

M. whereas the energy transition process should go hand in hand with economic competitiveness and whereas it is essential to protect the energy security of regions in transition;

N. whereas nuclear energy is included in the green taxonomy and whereas, therefore, it contributes to the transition towards a decarbonised economy; whereas more investment in that energy form would help to achieve the EU’s strategic autonomy and carbon emission reduction goals; whereas, further, that energy source would be an effective replacement with regard to energy performance, job creation and economic growth in transition regions;

O. whereas the European continent is warming faster than the rest of the world and the risks posed by climate change are becoming more intricate and challenging to address;

P. whereas particular focus and support need to be directed to the vulnerable situation of islands and insular and outermost regions, given the serious socio-economic challenges they face in the transition towards the EU’s 2030 energy targets and the goal of a climate-neutral economy by 2050; whereas the co-existing handicaps of islands, stemming from insularity, combined with the severe impact of the climate crisis, place their citizens at further disadvantage, exacerbating existing social and economic disparities; whereas the increasing occurrence of extreme weather events and natural disasters, such as droughts, floods and wildfires, further widens development gaps and hinders progress in the sustainable development of EU island regions;

Q. whereas without adequate attention and financial support, regions formerly dependent on energy production, including peat production, mining activities and refinery processes, as well as other heavily industrialised regions, face the risk of economic decline, reducing their competitiveness; whereas these areas often experience demographic challenges such as persistent depopulation, in particular in rural areas, islands and outermost regions, as well as ageing and brain drain, combined with limited access to investment, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient connectivity and a widening gap in productivity and employment opportunities when compared to more dynamic regions; whereas they require comprehensive support and specific reconversion strategies to turn these challenges into opportunities;

R. whereas the effectiveness of just transition strategies depends on the coherent and strategic use of EU financial instruments; whereas it is therefore essential to maintain a territorial and place-based approach for the Territorial Just Transition Plans, ensuring the involvement of regional and local authorities in the design of bottom-up strategies for the territories covered by the programme;

S. whereas the technical assistance for public authorities under the JTF, InvestEU and the Public Sector Loan Facility – the three pillars of the Just Transition mechanism – should be strengthened;

T. whereas the application process for the JTF must be simplified, streamlined and made more flexible in order to ensure broader accessibility and enable a faster and more effective deployment of resources; whereas simplifying procedures is essential to maximise the JTF’s impact, particularly for smaller regions and local authorities with limited administrative capacity, and to ensure that support reaches the communities and workers most affected by the green transition in a timely manner;

Targeting areas of job losses

1. Calls on the Commission, upon a proposal from the Member States, in partnership with the regions and local authorities, to facilitate the establishment of special JTF economic zones for areas affected by site closures, until such a time as the majority of jobs lost locally are replaced in the local area, with priority access to funding given initially to locations directly affected in the general proximity of the area where jobs were lost, as well as to other areas, provided that it is duly justified that the direct or indirect impact of these losses warrants access to the JTF; underlines the importance of also taking into account social criteria such as local unemployment rates, socio-economic precariousness and increased risks of social exclusion, ensuring that economic recovery is community-led and sustainable;

2. Calls for the introduction of swifter planning decisions along with special measures, financial instruments and incentives in these zones, including temporary and targeted tax incentives for businesses and investments, provided that they do not undermine the stability of the single market; reaffirms that such measures can create jobs, provide opportunities for people living in these regions and support economic operators, giving priority to SMEs, microenterprises and those operating traditional local and family-run businesses, enhancing regional development and competitiveness;

3. Stresses that special economic zones have the potential to stimulate investment and growth in regions, such as the special economic zones established at Shannon Airport in County Clare, Ireland in 1959, and in Katowice, Silesia region, Poland in 1996; insists, however, that these mechanisms must be governed by stringent rules to ensure that the economic benefits effectively reach local populations, prevent any form of social or fiscal dumping, money laundering and tax evasion, and are subject to strict criteria for

social, economic and environmental sustainability, giving priority to local businesses, especially SMEs and microenterprises;

4. Calls for the inclusion of island regions as eligible areas for the application of reduced tax rates within the framework of insular JTF economic zones, with the aim of addressing the disproportionately high cost of living in these territories, which is further exacerbated by the impacts of the green and energy transitions; stresses that such fiscal measures are essential to enhance the economic viability of island communities, support local businesses and attract sustainable investment; highlights that targeted tax incentives can serve as an effective tool to counteract the persistent trend of island depopulation, promote job creation and foster resilient, self-sustaining local economies, while ensuring a fair and inclusive transition towards climate neutrality;

Education, training of workers and apprenticeships

5. Points out that EU funds (the European Structural and Investment Funds and, in particular, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF)) and the JTF are being used to supplement the investments of the various regions in early childhood education;

6. Reiterates that many regions covered by the JTF have a significant and proud history of training and apprenticeship programmes, which are essential for the reskilling of workers and also for responding to the new demands of the labour market; underlines that their continuation should be prioritised; calls for funding within the JTF to support access to training and apprenticeship opportunities, especially for women, young people and marginalised communities;

7. Stresses, in this regard, the need to prioritise investment in all levels of education and training in affected areas, including by integrating green and digital skills, literacy and basic numeracy, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills, into training programmes, in line with the Commission’s recent communications on the Skills Union, the Basic Skills Action Plan and the strategic framework for STEM education; insists on the importance of funding to strengthen basic digital and technical skills in order to enhance employability and competitiveness; emphasises the need for adequate EU funding for tuition for the children and students coming from the affected areas, including financial support for secondary level and higher education;

8. Stresses that the shortage of specialised teachers exacerbates skills gaps in strategic sectors and undermines the economic competitiveness of less developed regions; calls for the development of targeted programmes to improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession, particularly in STEM, through economic and

non-economic incentives, especially in regions affected by the transition; stresses the importance of allocating specific resources for innovative teacher and trainer training, as well as the development of digital pedagogical skills, which are essential to prepare workers for industrial transitions; calls for measures to improve teachers’ salary and working conditions in order to attract and retain qualified educators, particularly in areas undergoing transition, recognising their crucial role in preparing the workforce for future industrial needs; calls on the Commission to assess the impact of investments in trainer and teacher training to ensure better use of funding and optimise the skills outcomes acquired by students and workers in less developed regions;

9. While recognising investments already made in apprenticeships, calls for a significant portion of education funds in affected regions to be used for apprenticeships and vocational training that aligns with the needs of the local community where jobs are lost, through high-quality apprenticeship programmes, ensuring that these programmes offer adequate remuneration, decent working conditions, and quality training;

10. Stresses that cohesion policy is the right response to economic disparities, and that its role is particularly important now in view of the threat of deindustrialisation; calls for greater coordination between the JTF, the ESF+ and the European Regional Development Fund to maximise their impact on the redeployment and reskilling of workers affected by industrial restructurings; further calls for the management of ESF+ funding to be more regionally focused, guided by a multilevel approach, involving national, regional and local authorities, and for greater and better synergies between the ESF+ and the JTF, particularly in relation to education and training; recognises also the essential role of the European Investment Bank in supporting the just transition and the need to continue strengthening cooperation between public and private investment;

11. Stresses the importance of aligning cohesion policy, including the JTF, with regional innovation strategies and smart specialisation priorities to enhance regional competitiveness and support economic diversification and the resilience of transitioning areas; urges the Commission and the Member States to pay special attention to areas in demographic decline and to prioritise affected areas over those not affected by transition in the selection criteria for projects eligible for JTF financing, increasing the score of entrepreneurial initiatives located squarely in municipalities affected by the closure of carbon-intensive sectors, thus ensuring that this incentive translates into tangible results; urges the Commission and the Member States to make sure that the funds available under the RRF contribute to supporting the transition process in the territories in question;

12. Recognises the pivotal role of the automotive industry in the EU, including in generating employment across various regions; considers the inclusion of the automotive sector within the scope of the just transition essential, given the challenges posed by global competition in the shift to electromobility and the impact of unjustified trade barriers; stresses the need for targeted policies that prioritise worker reskilling and initiatives aimed at diversifying the economic model of regions with a significant automotive industry;

13. Is of the opinion that vocational training is a necessary response to the economic transformation of regions; stresses the need to establish, through the JTF, ambitious and targeted vocational training and reskilling programmes for job seekers and workers directly affected by the economic transitions, in order to prevent the emergence of long-term structural unemployment; insists on the need to allocate funding for these programmes in the territorial just transition plans;

14. Calls on the Commission to work with Member States, local and regional authorities, trade unions and local businesses to ensure that particular attention is given to the fact that workers who have lost their jobs have the possibility of participating in ESF+ supported employment and training programmes or other EU-funded programmes in their communities;

15. Emphasises the need to develop apprenticeship and training programmes for areas affected by the transition, in collaboration with local businesses, education institutions, centres for training and lifelong learning, social partners and local and regional authorities and public administration, to provide students and unemployed workers with opportunities and meaningful experiences within their communities and safeguard their ‘right to stay’;

16. Underlines that effective retraining and upskilling programmes require adequate planning and preparation well in advance of any phase out or significant industrial change; notes that the training and retraining of workers and jobseekers, upskilling, reskilling and lifelong education must be carried out in a manner that ensures that no one, regardless of their work sector, type of contract, gender or geographical location, is forgotten on the path to the EU’s green and digital transitions; calls for measures to facilitate the proactive anticipation and planning of skills needs and to ensure these rights for all affected workers; invites the Member States and regional authorities to establish ‘Local Skills Councils’ or similar multi-stakeholder bodies, tasked with diagnosing local skills gaps, anticipating skills needs related to the green and digital transitions, and advising on targeted investments under the JTF and the ESF+;

17. Proposes the creation of a regional mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the impact of apprenticeship schemes, involving all

stakeholders – local authorities, employers, education institutions and young people; believes that this would allow training strategies to be quickly adjusted to the demands of the labour market and the direct feedback from participants, thus ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of apprenticeships in the long term;

18. Points out that regions affected by the ecological transition are facing a shortage of skills and labour, while in many parts of Europe, there is a housing crisis and overcrowding in urban areas; proposes the creation of an affordable housing programme in such regions and notes that this programme should attract young people, thus contributing to the economic and social revitalisation of these areas;

19. Encourages the Member States to integrate housing guarantees, co-living schemes and rental support for apprentices and students into JTF and ESF+ supported projects, particularly in regions with high youth unemployment rates or those experiencing demographic decline;

20. Calls for a portion of cohesion funds to be specifically allocated to renovating the homes of the lowest-income households and the least energy-efficient buildings, as they would otherwise be left behind in the green transition;

Quality jobs plan

21. Notes that the Just Transition has not sufficiently taken into account the specificities of the different profiles of workers and affected communities; notes, with regret, that seasonal work alternatives have not been created, both as a source of additional income for workers and as an opportunity for income for students;

22. Draws attention to unemployment and youth unemployment, in particular, in many regions, rural areas and Member States; highlights, therefore, the need for accessibility to affordable housing, transportation and education, and for the inclusion of young generations, in particular from low-income households;

23. Emphasises the need to complement the financing of higher education and training boards in order to ensure the retraining or reskilling of workers who are considering changing their professional profile or who have lost their jobs, particularly women and those over the age of 50; proposes that the JTF should also offer retraining, reskilling and educational opportunities to the immediate family members of affected workers within the proximity of their local areas;

24. Warns that some of the industries that have closed, or are in the process of closing, offer labour conditions above the economic average, including higher wages, risk allowances and health insurance for workers and their families; highlights, therefore, the

need for temporary funding under the JTF framework to compensate for the difference between unemployment benefits and the new salaries, allowing for a smoother transition and ensuring all of the previously assumed contractual obligations are fulfilled;

25. Welcomes the Commission’s commitment to propose a quality jobs roadmap by the end of 2025, developed together with the social partners to ensure a just transition for all; recalls that the roadmap should support fair wages, high standards for health and safety, good working conditions, training and fair job transitions for workers, including the self-employed, notably by increasing collective bargaining coverage; stresses that the roadmap should make the management of transitions a key priority and include accompanying proposals that concretely support workers;

26. Stresses the need for ‘social contracts’ concluded for the economic sectors undergoing the just transition process and notified to the Commission to be approved without delay; stresses that these social contracts should be based on a sound diagnosis and economic forecasts, support collective bargaining and respect for workers’ rights, and take into account the specificities of the regions concerned; supports the creation of social protection mechanisms for workers directly affected by industrial and energy transitions, including a transition income and targeted extensions of unemployment benefits; calls for a directive on the just transition in the world of work that sets out a legislative framework to ensure the creation of quality jobs in the regions affected by the transition; encourages the creation of worker groups in industries affected by the transition, allowing former employees to benefit directly from regional economic renewal;

27. Calls on the Commission to facilitate the establishment of a social training programme for older unemployed workers, especially women and long-term unemployed persons who are unable to retrain and acquire new jobs, ensuring that they are supported until retirement in order to guarantee them a decent standard of living; stresses the need to strengthen the role of women and promote the integration of persons with disabilities;

28. Stresses that the Member States must prioritise access to state-owned land and should, where possible, recover, rehabilitate and repurpose buildings and other assets, such as old industrial facilities and mining sites, for new projects funded under the JTF framework, including renewables, energy efficiency renovation, or green reindustrialisation; stresses that there should be oversight and monitoring of this process by the Member States and the Commission;

Implementation and governance

29. Stresses that the transition of regions eligible for JTF support is not yet complete and that these regions will continue to require specific support in tackling the different challenges connected with the energy transition in the future; considers it necessary to adopt measures to ensure maximum take-up of these funds, including by simplifying administrative procedures, setting up support and advisory mechanisms to help local authorities to access and successfully use necessary investments, and increasing pre-financing for local authorities;

30. Regrets that some EU regions are experiencing a continuous outflow of young and skilled workers due to demographic shifts and migration, with rural and inland areas, islands and outermost regions being particularly impacted; recalls, in this context, the importance of strong rural-urban linkages as well as targeted support for women in rural areas; recalls that such levels of migration and depopulation seriously affect the competitiveness, economic growth, food security, productivity and sustainability of the regions impacted;

31. Notes, with concern, the severe drop in recent years in adequate levels of national funding by Member States for their poorer regions; recalls the importance of respecting the EU rule on additionality; calls on the Commission to ensure that national authorities duly take into account internal cohesion when drafting and implementing Structural and Investment Fund projects;

32. Accepts that the implementation of the JTF process is a matter for Member States, but calls for a stronger role for local and regional authorities and those involved in the decision-making process, ensuring that funding strategies are aligned with the specific needs of the communities affected by the transition and are consistent with investments under other strategic funds linked to the just transition; stresses that it is crucial to simplify access to applications and broaden the scope of the fund so as to allow other equally affected regions and sectors to benefit from the JTF; underlines the need for the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to present clear guidelines on implementation issues in order to speed up the allocation of funds and the efficient implementation of JTF initiatives;

33. Believes that the Commission should have set out clear parameters for each Member State to pursue in areas such as investing in education and training, upskilling and reskilling of workers for alternative employment, and enabling third-party investors to preserve the culture and traditions of former coal and peat regions, as well as helping clean the polluted areas around the extraction sites; encourages the exchange of know-how and best practices between regions undergoing transition; calls, furthermore, for synergies with initiatives, such as the New European Bauhaus, on projects that repurpose old industrial facilities into social and cultural venues;

34. Recognises the shortfall in funding for bottom-up projects of scale; recommends that a continuation of the JTF fill these gaps when a need is identified; stresses the importance of providing dedicated technical support from the JTF to regions, local authorities and community groups from the earliest stages in order to strengthen their capacity for bottom-up planning and to assist potential beneficiaries in preparing high-quality, impactful projects;

35. Recognises the lack of matching funding for groups in the voluntary sector applying for the JTF and calls for a simplified funding mechanism; stresses the importance of granting sufficient pre-financing of more than half of the capital cost or substantive part of the project for groups who are deemed to be of low risk, thereby ensuring that these groups avoid high interest rates and fees for matching and bridging finance, thus empowering local voluntary and community organisations in delivering transition-related projects effectively;

36. Calls for synergies between the public and private sectors to be stepped up so that they can tackle the transition process together, thus paving the way for productive conversion of the territories in question;

37. Highlights the negative impact of State aid rules on voluntary and not-for-profit groups; underlines, in this context, the essential role of social economy entities in providing concrete, community-based responses to the social needs of EU citizens and in supporting inclusive, people-centred solutions for a just transition; considers that the State aid rules could be relaxed, under justified conditions, for voluntary and not-for-profit groups deemed to be low-risk; calls on the Commission, in this context, to work with Member States so that there can be greater consistency and clarity in the interpretation of State aid rules insofar as they apply to community and not-for-profit groups;

38. Highlights the need to develop an enhanced community benefit model, tailored to each just transition region; calls on the Member States and managing authorities, to this effect, to allocate a share of JTF resources to supporting the establishment of green community schemes, social innovation and the social economy, notably by funding citizen energy cooperatives, participatory local renewable energy production projects and initiatives that promote a local circular economy; notes that former workers and their families should be allowed to invest or participate in these projects, thereby strengthening the link between the green transition and social inclusion;

39. Reiterates that housing-related cooperative or community-led projects should benefit from simplified access to JTF funding, including through lower co-financing thresholds and advance

payments; calls for guidance to be provided to Member States on enabling housing actors to access funds;

40. Calls for a reduction in the administrative burden of the JTF on communities, through the creation of specialised ‘hands-on’ managers and the development of a one-stop shop and adequate digital platforms to provide support and assistance in handling applications and managing the projects once they are selected, ensuring that these communities also have equal access to funding, thereby helping to address regional disparities;

41. Calls for the JTF to support, highlight and preserve the cultural and industrial heritage of affected communities by promoting sustainable tourism development; encourages the establishment of dedicated training programmes for heritage guides so as to foster local employment and cultural continuity and support the creation of visitor centres and interpretive spaces that showcase local history, traditions and the transformation journey of these regions, thereby creating local employment and preserving cultural identity while attracting cultural and educational tourism;

42. Underlines the strategic importance of people’s ‘right to stay’ in their regions or local areas; calls on the Commission to issue specific guidelines on how to implement and enforce this principle across the EU and its regions; calls for stronger integration of this as a cross-cutting principle in all EU policies, so that they support the objectives of social, economic and territorial cohesion, as set out in the Treaties;

Social justice before transition for the whole economy

43. Underlines the key role cohesion policy plays in delivering on EU policy priorities and boosting the EU economy by contributing to just, inclusive and sustainable transition and development, promoting economic and social convergence between countries and regions, and fostering innovation and employment; regrets that, due to the limited flexibility of the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), the Commission has resorted to reorienting cohesion policy, which is not a crisis response tool but has been repeatedly called on to make up for shortcomings in budgetary flexibility or crisis response mechanisms in the MFF to the detriment of its long-term policy objectives; calls on the Commission and the Member States to accelerate the implementation of cohesion policy;

44. Believes that shifts in the geopolitical landscape, along with other factors, are resulting in massive changes to the functioning of the EU economy; underlines that the JTF should maintain a decisive role in the process of decarbonisation; calls on the Commission and the Member States to examine the timescales for the closure of key

energy players in the EU, and to mitigate the impact of these closures, ensuring ‘social justice in transition’ for workers;

45. Calls for special consideration to be given to the need to promote electricity connections, to increasing grid hosting capacity and to strengthening energy storage systems, as necessary components of an effective energy transition; calls on the Commission to encourage the Member States to fully implement the provisions of Directive (EU) 2019/944[1] related to citizen energy communities, providing specific measures to protect vulnerable households from energy poverty in JTF regions; believes, in this context, that support should be given to local community-led green infrastructure and renewable energy projects, such as solar, wind and hydropower installations, as well as sustainable transportation, which stimulate local economies, offering great potential for the creation of local jobs in construction, engineering, maintenance and related industries;

46. Highlights the importance of the Member States in promoting sectoral social dialogue and collective bargaining, especially in newly emerging green industries, and also in ensuring the inclusion of small and medium-sized businesses, including social economy enterprises; stresses that the Minimum Wage Directive[2] represents a great opportunity to strengthen collective bargaining on wage-setting and the presence of the social partners in emerging sectors;

47. Stresses the crucial role of investments in high-quality public services in building social resilience and coping with economic crises, in particular in regions suffering from severe permanent natural and demographic challenges; highlights the need to give priority specifically to investments in basic infrastructure, social services and sustainable tourism, as well as in logistics networks and connectivity, including sustainable transport modes, with the aim of fostering resilience and innovation, while promoting inclusive growth, creating new jobs and making new business projects viable in affected territories;

48. Calls on the Commission to focus, in particular, on islands and outermost regions to support them in addressing their serious socio-economic challenges deriving from the process of transitioning towards the EU’s 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy in the EU by 2050, and to work with the Member States to earmark specific amounts from their national allocations in

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[1] Directive (EU) 2019/944 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on common rules for the internal market for electricity and amending Directive 2012/27/EU (recast) (OJ L 158, 14.6.2019, p. 125, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/944/oj).

[2] Directive (EU) 2022/2041 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union (OJ L 275, 25.10.2022, p. 33, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2041/oj).

the framework of their territorial just transition plans; calls for concrete compensatory measures that offset negative consequences for islands' economic, social and territorial cohesion in the process of transitioning to a cleaner economy and society, that may arise due to their dependence on the aviation and maritime sectors; calls, therefore, for islands to be made a priority in the development of infrastructure aimed at decarbonising air and maritime transport;

49. Regrets that the Commission has not proposed a stand-alone Just Transition Fund (JTF) in its recent proposals on the future multiannual financial framework (MFF); calls therefore for the continuation of the JTF through a JTF 'II', for the post-2027 programming period so as to provide direct support for households and communities to transition, and to enable an intervention capacity commensurate with the scale of the socio-economic, employment, demographic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the EU's 2030 energy targets; stresses that this fund should operate under shared management and partnership principles, within the framework of cohesion policy, and stresses that it should have its own predictable budget allocation, ensuring its autonomy from extraordinary crisis response instruments, such as NextGenerationEU;

50. Urges the Commission to streamline and align financial instruments under the post-2027 MFF, ensuring a coherent and coordinated approach to supporting just transition strategies through JTF 'II'; highlights that the scope of JTF 'II' could be expanded, in line with proposals from the Member States, with measures to be put in place until such a time as jobs lost locally are replaced in the local area, and should be focused on reconciling sustainable development with competitiveness, ensuring that regions in transition can thrive economically without compromising their environmental and social goals; stresses the need for plans for just transition areas that adopt a proactive approach to also anticipate the potential upcoming transformative processes and that include a clear commitment to developing strategic regeneration and development initiatives, with a particular focus on enterprise development and job creation in the areas most affected by the closure of fossil fuel production facilities; highlights that Member States have certain flexibility on their pathway to decarbonisation, in line with agreed EU targets, taking into account the technological and economic perspective, and depending on local and regional needs;

51. Stresses the need for having in place a more precise allocation criteria and delimitation of the territorial scope of the funds, to focus specifically on local and regional authorities, under the NUTS 3[1] administrative level; underlines the importance that the funds reach the regions particularly affected by the transition to a climate-

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[1] Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics – level 3.

neutral economy due to the sectoral character of their economy, or the closure of carbon-intensive installations, and that investments are not concentrated only in the large urban centres of the NUTS 3 area; stresses the urgency of also integrating territorial and demographic indicators in the allocation of JTF funds, such as population ageing, youth outmigration, sustained population decline and depopulation and the impact of transient employment;

52. Believes that the good governance framework is key in implementing the just transition; underlines that local and regional authorities play a pivotal role in ensuring the effective design, implementation and monitoring of EU programmes, given their proximity to citizens and deep understanding of territorial needs; highlights the importance of upholding the partnership principle and the European code of conduct on partnership, and of emphasising the place-based approach, to ensure the full participation of local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society organisations in the governance, selection and monitoring of funded projects, in line with the multilevel governance principle laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/1060;

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53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Committee of the Regions and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.