



**European Committee
of the Regions**

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OPINION

European Missions

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- emphasises that, in the light of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Missions, as a new and vital instrument in tackling burning societal challenges, are a real test of the EU's impact and credibility;
- encourages the EU Missions to stress the progress toward humanity and human-centricity on which sustainability in all its dimensions – ecological, economic, social, and cultural – is the driver of change in reaching the ambitious targets of the EU Missions;
- stresses that the EU Missions need to co-create new ways to operate;
- is ready to cooperate with the EU Missions to make the benchmarking and bench-learning processes between demonstration cities/regions and others attractive. The financing instruments need to be flexible and innovative, and encourage the real interests of cities/regions;
- underlines the need for an effective system of multilevel governance that combines the EU Missions with local and regional development strategies, smart specialisation strategies, the COVID recovery measures and innovation funding through the structural funds;
- reaffirms that the challenges are complex, and only part of the necessary scientific and technological knowledge exists. Reaching the targets is possible with extensive foresight activities, increasing R&D investments, real-world prototyping, experimenting, and scaling-up of the results;
- reminds all that the core of the EU Missions is research and innovation. The complex societal challenges can only be tackled through increasing RDI investments;
- highlights that the key questions are how the cities and regions learn to orchestrate necessary activities and how the activities attract private industrial and other investments;
- endorses industrial RDI carbon handprint measures in creating new extended products, systems, and other innovative solutions playing an essential part in reaching the climate targets;
- underlines that the EU Missions will be successful only if closing the knowledge and innovation divide in Europe and the innovation gap between Europe and the US are highlighted.

Rapporteur

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Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on European Missions
COM(2021) 609 final

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions - European Missions

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the EU Missions, as a coordinated effort by the Commission to pool the necessary resources in terms of funding programmes, policies and regulations, as well as other activities to mobilise and activate public and private actors, to co-create real and lasting impact to boost societal uptake of new solutions and approaches. The CoR stresses the need for an inclusive approach whereby the EU Missions, alongside EU-wide cohesion policy, and all other EU financing instruments, should be used to promote territorial cohesion and to reach the Sustainable Development Goals;
2. emphasises¹ that, in the light of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the European Missions, as a new and vital instrument in tackling burning societal challenges, are a real test of the EU's impact and credibility. They need to have widespread legitimacy and acceptance. As the European Commission has highlighted, the role of cities and regions with all their stakeholders and citizens is crucial in achieving the ambitious targets of the EU Missions;
3. reiterates the CoR statement² of support for the implementation of the EU Missions as a bold step towards addressing societal challenges, and underlines the need for an effective system of multilevel governance that combines the EU Missions with local and regional development strategies, smart specialisation strategies, the COVID recovery measures and innovation funding through the structural funds;
4. urges the key decision-makers in the EU and the Member States to react with a swift and decisive response to the situation in Ukraine, including in the launch of the EU Missions, especially the City Mission. Funding criteria in Next Generation EU Funds and other public financing sources need to be flexibly geared towards getting part of the City Mission activities to form European energy transformation highways. These should support public-private research in the development of new energy system solutions. In particular, cities and other public actors can use innovative public procurement, together with companies, to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy sources and create sustainable, innovative energy solutions to replace fossil fuels now purchased from Russia to EU countries;
5. welcomes the fact that the European Missions Communication³ duly acknowledges the relevance of local and regional authorities in the delivery, as well as in the design and communication phases of the European Missions;

¹ CoR Plenary 27 January 2022, Resolution on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

² CoR Plenary 1-2 December 2021, Resolution on the 2022 Work Programme of the European Commission.

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on European Missions – COM(2021) 609 final.

6. emphasises that, in the light of co-creating knowledge and know-how, the EU Missions' implementation needs to be rooted in the everyday work focusing on developing and renewing the processes of cities and regions. This will build systematic synergies with EU Cohesion policy, the use of Structural Funds and other dedicated instruments. This will also showcase globally the potential of regions and local communities and the role of municipalities in making the targeted transformations happen;

The EU Missions as an ambitious new instrument to tackle grand societal challenges

7. acknowledges that the EU Missions are planned to be a "new" and "vital" instrument as stated by the European Commission: "EU Missions are a new way to bring concrete solutions to some of our greatest challenges by delivering concrete results and impact by 2030 by putting research and innovation into a new role, combined with new forms of governance and collaboration, as well as by engaging citizens"⁴;
8. reminds that each EU Mission should define a clear roadmap and create a systemic new multi-governance approach and methodologies on experimenting, prototyping, monitoring, and scaling-up activities at all governance levels. Special attention is needed for creating portfolios of actions both at the EU and regional/local levels and disseminating these effectively in all phases of planning and implementation. This requires the involvement and engagement of local and regional authorities and partnerships in sharing the effective innovative governance experiences;
9. points out the need to allocate Mission funding to local and regional levels for co-creating non-standard breakthroughs in many "stuck situations" which too often block adequate progress in achieving new solutions and impact. This requires new European partnerships based on local and regional interests defined in Smart Specialisation Strategies. The EU Missions should use the experiences the CoR and JRC joint piloting exercise "Partnerships for Regional Innovation" will bring;
10. encourages the EU Missions to stress the progress toward humanity and human-centricity on which sustainability in all its dimensions – ecological, economic, social, and cultural – is the driver of change in reaching the ambitious targets of the EU Missions. The quality of life can be increased only by working together consciously in complex entities. In this, we need to find a better balance between material and intangible well-being in Europe and globally. Nature makes it possible to live on this planet. We must respect the human dependence on nature;
11. stresses that the EU Missions need to co-create new ways to operate. The development requires all the actors to learn new competencies by integrating technology and research with a human-centric approach, committing to implement joint green and digital transformation processes, and securing access to the needed resources. The requirements are essential in creating well-functioning regional and local RDI ecosystems which build new innovative knowledge bridges to connect top-level European knowledge creators with regional and local living labs and other experimentation centres, as well as demonstration activities such as lighthouses. With the help

⁴ European Research Area Policy Agenda – Overview of actions for the period 2022-2024, European Commission 2021.

of these, all cities and regions can create bench-learning processes and peer networking to use the concepts and solutions of forerunners in smart and sustainable practices;

12. points out that regional and local governance, foresight, and increasing RDI investments are the cornerstones of the EU Missions' portfolios, consisting of professionally orchestrated actions at the European, national, regional, and local level. Orchestration in the EU Missions increases collaboration, motivation, and capabilities, in other words, competitiveness by co-creating new portfolios and actions. Orchestration involves many parallel steps and multi-governance activities across disparate systems. The financial instruments, both public and private, need to be engaged, and support needs to be provided especially to less developed regions to encourage all regions to improve their RDI systems and contribute to the implementation of the EU Missions;
13. recalls its instrumental role, based on its experience with its six commissions and campaigns such as the Green Deal Going Local and the EER European Entrepreneurial Regions, in the implementation of the EU Missions – noting that the CoR provides a natural access point for cooperation with the public and private sector, industry and services as well as with citizens;

The role of cities and regions in the EU Missions

14. underlines, in accordance with the Joint Action Plan signed 2020 by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel and the CoR, that the CoR with the Member States and European regions and cities is ready to have an active role in co-creating a multi-level governance system to reach the EU Mission targets. Measures to ensure the necessary development will be based on regional place-based innovation ecosystems, and Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3/S4);
15. can influence the overall EU Missions processes, inform decision-makers, and mobilise regions and cities to become active contributors in different ways, etc. The EU Mission plans have a powerful regional and local place-based dimension, and the implementation mechanisms include proposals putting regions and cities – and their RDI ecosystems – at their centre. Thus, the CoR can cooperate extensively with all partners to ensure that this new, bottom-up policy instrument creates the desired impact;
16. agrees – employing all the CoR commissions responsible for various mission topics – to assist in engaging as many cities and regions as possible to ensure that regional and local levels support the EU Missions by:
 - a) implementing information campaigns, direct dialogue, and other joint open and interactive engaging processes targeted to different groups including also children under the age of 18,
 - b) getting the forerunner communities to sign in for experimenting with innovative solutions in their real-life practices,
 - c) getting the demonstrator communities to contribute to large-scale deployment processes of innovative solutions and scaling-up the best solutions for European-wide use,
 - d) ensuring that the European diversity of regions with their multiple communities of stakeholders and citizens is broadly in the mission implementation activities;

17. calls on the Member States to support the implementation of the EU Missions by creating synergies with national and regional programmes and facilitating access to EU and national financing;
18. urges the ensuring that all urban and rural areas and regions (top, average and laggard performers) have sufficient capacity and capabilities to innovate in their communities and are supported through relevant learning processes that allow them also to operate as platforms for multi-actor service providers supporting others, including all actor groups. The local/regional value-creation processes need to be orchestrated at the level of efficient collaborative value-chains and value-streams developing further the ecosystems;
19. emphasises that the ambitious targets require, as a crucial precondition, decision-makers, civil servants, and innovation professionals to gain competencies to operate as change agents in acquiring new knowledge and capabilities. The three critical processes are:
 - a) the operational learning processes of cities and regions, with a focus on integrating mission-related activities into other local activities to be part of the normal strategic and operational decision-making,
 - b) motivating and supporting companies and research institutes, universities, vocational institutes, and their place-based and thematic ecosystems to contribute to co-creating new innovative frontrunning solutions, and
 - c) using new inclusive methods in innovation.

The means in these processes should include broad-scale partnerships, innovative public procurement, rapidly developed prototypes and experimentation with new solutions;

20. reminds that proven processes are available, but they require the commitment of individual cities and regions and the dedicated cooperation arranged by the EU Mission teams. Allocating funding for European-wide partnerships will boost acquiring these critical factors across a multitude of European cities and regions. Several existing EU instruments, such as JRC, Interreg, JPIs, EIT and its KICs can have an essential role in this;
21. stresses the need to review all the EU financial instruments to support Mission activities, especially on the local and regional level. The Horizon funds are not easily accessible by regions and cities and are not yet aligned enough with the new strategic objectives of the EU Missions. Many regions have considerable difficulties accessing funding with multiple calls, highly specialised criteria and complex systems. For instance, many regions face problems in relation to financing for upskilling their workforce to accelerate the green transition essential in the EU Missions. This will require a review to simplify access to EU funds;

Guidelines for more influential EU Mission implementation

22. underlines the need to help to create dynamic partnerships, which need to be partly formalised reciprocal engagements yet also partially flexible, for the partnership contracts between the EU Missions and the demonstrating cities and regions to increase the European-wide impact of the significant assignments and the work of distributed demonstrators;

23. supports the flexible use and underlines the active conceptual development of city and region contracts which are proposed in the implementation plans of the EU Missions;
24. proposes creating the concept of the EU Mission Label for those cities and regions which will take the responsibility as demonstrating forerunners and supporters of the European green and digital transition in reaching the EU Mission targets and scaling-up the results of their innovative solutions, and calls for learning from already existing practices, such as the Covenant of Mayors;
25. proposes different ways to use the EU Mission Label to add synergy with other relevant EU and other related initiatives and the use of financing instruments, such as InvestEU Fund, Recovery and Resilience Facility, Interregional Innovation Investments I3, Interreg Europe, the Connecting Europe Facility, Digital Europe, EU4Health, EIB and EIT. The CoR proposes creating a European-wide system by which both the EU and the Member States use the EU Mission Label to simplify the application processes. The Label should help access EU and national funds to support local and regional level activities in reaching the ambitious EU Mission targets and at the same time improving local and regional procedures;
26. points out that, at local and regional level, ERA Hubs can be one of the most effective tools for aligning regional R&I strategies, including smart specialisation strategies (S3/S4), with national and European strategies, the ERA, Horizon Europe and the EU Missions. The ERA Hubs can thus contribute to the emergence of structuring projects that feed in particular into the EU Missions and mobilise the different sources of funding around them, so it would be useful to link up whenever possible the EU Missions Label with the ERA Hubs;
27. recalls the need to create and use effective knowledge management procedures to enforce the EU Missions by using the best global and regional knowledge, while taking into account the ethical criteria of the Commission's new internationalisation strategy for research and innovation. To take-up and scale-up the results, Horizon Europe and other instruments need to be more dynamic for experimenting and prototyping in real-world settings;
28. stresses that the EU Missions should be implemented through an open and participatory process, involving all relevant stakeholders at local, regional, European, and global levels⁵. Engagement by regions, municipalities and citizens in particular will be crucial for the successful implementation of the EU Missions. In this regard, direct dialogue with these stakeholders must be ensured in every Mission. The CoR is ready to be a strong ally of the EU Missions;
29. points that the EU Mission experiments and demonstrations should focus on orchestrating activities to push further the frontiers of science, mastering deep technologies, and combine digital, physical, environmental, and biological innovations – and regularly review and share the outcomes at the forefront level. The Smart Specialisation Strategies as concepts for regional collaboration with industry and research should have a high profile in the EU Missions;

⁵

CoR opinion on Horizon Europe: The Framework Programme 9 for Research and Innovation (COR-2018-03891).

Foresight and societal innovations crucial for and created by the EU Missions

30. reaffirms that the challenges are complex, and only part of the necessary scientific and technological knowledge exists. Reaching the targets is possible with extensive foresight activities, increasing R&D investments, real-world prototyping, experimenting, and scaling-up of the results;
31. acknowledges the significant potential of research for all kinds of innovations and tackling grand societal challenges. Expects to this effect political decision-making, in general, to be more evidence-based, research-supportive, and targeted on creating favourable conditions for societal innovations, while implementing those fast enough in real-life practice and processes;
32. reminds that the ambitious targets of the EU Missions can be achieved only by supporting effective learning processes for regional and organisational political leaders, managers, experts, and citizens. European city/region-driven concepts must be tailored to the region's situation by a systemic professional development anchored in local learning-by-doing for all;
33. emphasises that the EU Missions should focus on using the potential of intangible assets and intellectual capital. Embedding this knowledge in political decision-making, especially to create intelligent and human-centric cities where the focus is on sustainability can be instrumental in catalysing investments in human capital, structural capital, relational capital, and RDI in general;
34. highlights the importance of moving to action, based on the main statements in European R&D and technology policy as defined in the EU Strategic Foresight 2021 report⁶, especially:
 - a) The coming decades will be marked by an increasing redistribution of global power, with its geo-economic centre of gravity shifting eastwards.
 - b) The EU is in global competition for "first mover" advantage in standard-setting.
 - c) The EU needs to position itself more firmly in the development and production of next-generation inclusive technologies.
 - d) Beyond specific technologies, hyperconnectivity is driving the transformation.
 - e) Critical raw materials are essential for the EU's twin transitions.
 - f) The EU's digital sovereignty will depend on capacity to store, extract and process data, while satisfying the requirements of trust, security and fundamental rights.
 - g) The EU's strategic autonomy must be promoted.
 - h) A smart mix of industrial, research and trade policies with international partnerships could ensure sustainable and diverse supply;
35. points out that in moving to action, technology development should, more than so far, be aligned with socio-economic developments and happen in a real-world context, thus ensuring rapid take-up and scale-up of the results;

⁶ EU 2021 Strategic Foresight Report, COM(2021) 750 final.

36. proposes increasing the EU interinstitutional collaboration on foresight with special roles for the JRC, European Parliament Research Services and the CoR. The CoR proposes considering at national, regional and municipal levels arranging participatory citizen science activities in general and above all for youth, especially university and secondary school students, for entrepreneurs, and for political decision-making by establishing committees for the future focusing on foresight and technology assessment;

New approach to technology and R&D policy by the EU Missions

37. underlines that the societal and behavioural transformation supporting the EU Mission goals needs to be inclusive and positive by applying prototyping widely and experimenting as methodological approach;
38. reminds all that the core of the EU Missions is research and innovation. The complex societal challenges can only be tackled through increasing RDI investments. Both ERA and industrial studies give clear evidence⁷ that the EU is lagging behind its main global competitors in business R&D intensity, particularly in high-tech sectors, and in scaling-up innovative SMEs, which yields negative effects on productivity, job creation and competitiveness;
39. agrees with the ERA targets⁸ to boost Europe's recovery and to support its green, digital and social transitions by supporting innovation-based competitiveness and fostering technological sovereignty in key strategic areas (e.g. artificial intelligence, robotics, cyber security, data ecologies, microelectronics, quantum computing, 5G, next generation batteries, renewable energy, hydrogen technologies, zero-emission built environments, smart mobility, etc.) in line with the model of open strategic autonomy;
40. calls for demand-based carbon neutrality policies covering carbon footprints and handprints as the criteria for sustainable public procurement. In addition to the carbon footprint, the CoR points out the importance of the carbon handprint, a new approach to creating and calculating climate impact by showing the positive impact that climate-friendly products and services make⁹;
41. endorses industrial RDI carbon handprint measures in creating new extended products, systems, and other innovative solutions playing an essential part in reaching the climate targets and points out that without a significant acceleration in clean energy innovation, net-zero emissions targets will not be achievable;
42. reiterates the need for new technology. The International Energy Agency (IEA) report¹⁰ shows analytical evidence that 25% of the reduction in carbon emissions needed to put the Earth's climate on a sustainable path will come from mature technologies. In comparison, 41% of the necessary tech will come from new technologies in the early adoption phase, and 34% will

⁷ COM(2020) 628 final – A new ERA for Research and Innovation.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ CoR Plenary 1 July 2021, Opinion on Forging a climate-resilient Europe – the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change

¹⁰ IEA Energy Technology Perspectives 2020.

come from technology at the demonstration stage, the prototype stage, or those not even conceived yet;

43. points out the importance and complexity of measuring GHG emissions. The basic measuring of GHG emissions uses scopes 1 and 2. By also using scope 3, the net-zero and net-negative targets can be reached. Scope 3 includes all other indirect emissions occurring throughout the whole value-chain;
44. emphasises the role of the EU Missions at the heart of the EU's priorities in making the green and digital transition a reality. The European Commission has launched the piloting phase of the ERA Hubs initiative to facilitate regional RDI collaboration and exchange of best practices, with the incentive of maximising the value of knowledge production, circulation, and use. The CoR encourages the EU Missions to explore the use of the ERA Hubs as a tool to connect local and regional R&I ecosystems and to actively partner with local and regional decision-makers in piloting the ERA Hubs in order to develop concrete cooperation;
45. stresses that the system of ERA Hubs tries to bring missing elements to the ERA and EEA landscapes to create strong European knowledge societies throughout Europe to accelerate the transformation of societies for green sustainable and digital growth. The ERA Hubs network ideally ensures that local and regional RDI ecosystems become an integral part of the European-wide RDI ecosystem;
46. supports enabling active local contributions for integrated implementation of the ERA Hubs, other experimentation of regional ecosystems, and the EU Missions in experimenting, rapid prototyping, testing, demonstrating, and scaling-up research and innovation effectiveness in cities and regions;
47. recognises that orchestrating diverse regional and local insights, ideas and learning is essential for creating a pan-European approach to innovative action. Sharing the learning across cities and regions, as well as across the five EU Missions, is essential. The CoR recommends the early creation of a co-learning network through which essential insights about both process and content can be shared and scaled – downscaled to other cities/regions, and upscaled to other EU Missions, and to Europe as a whole;
48. calls for the Council conclusions on the EU Missions to be published during the French Presidency to also provide an opportunity to strengthen the concept of ERA Hubs, on which Missions need to rely in order to be successfully anchored at local and regional level. These conclusions should also underline the importance of research infrastructure which is strongly supported by cities and regions, and crucial for the deployment of the EU Missions;
49. affirms that, while it is a priority to implement the Missions already decided upon, reflection must continue without interruption on the prospect of creating new missions when major new collective challenges arise. The crucial issue of preparing European societies to address preparedness for and management of health threats and crises should, following the creation of the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), feed into a reflection on a new mission focusing on this challenge given its systemic, cross-cutting and multi-stakeholder nature;

The CoR's experiences: Synergy between the EU Missions and other main policy instruments

50. urges that the EU Missions should build on the experience and knowledge of the existing EU initiatives and programmes to operate in synergy. Systemic change requires co-creation of transformational ecosystems based on learning and RDI with interdisciplinary scientific and operational synergy across Europe and covering all five EU Missions;
51. reiterates the need to increase the mentality to work openly together and increase local collaboration and European partnerships in inventing the new human-centric sustainable future for Europe. The potential capacities rely much on local and regional levels in all parts of Europe. Speed is essential. The grand societal challenges need to be tackled in the next few years. Knowledge and learning are the core;
52. proposes giving special attention to the steps in the EU Missions' implementation by the cities and regions with the supporting role of the CoR, including multi-level governance, funding, and successful execution on how the ambitious targets can be achieved by integrating them effectively into EU research and innovation policies, especially Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3/S4), ERA Hubs, New European Bauhaus, and other most relevant initiatives, programmes and instruments provided for under EU multilevel policies;
53. is committed to organising learning activities in collaboration with the JRC to support the EU Mission activities under the headings "City Science" and "Science Meets Regions" by boosting broad-scale impact activities and sharing the results of the EU Missions. Short-term measures are not an adequate response for addressing what is really needed. A useful activity is to support the creation of the network of regional Future Centres to stimulate creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset and link these to the New Bauhaus, the UN SDG work and the UNESCO's Futures Literacy Labs to ensure both the short- and long-term sustainability of the initiatives undertaken;
54. encourages deepening the collaboration with European networks that are active in enhancing RDI in tackling societal challenges, such as EUA, EARTO and ERRIN. In addition, each EU Mission should collaborate effectively with its theme-specific networks, such as CEMR, Eurocities and CPMR. The CoR collaborates extensively with all these stakeholder networks to ensure that the EU Missions as a new, bottom-up policy instrument creates the desired impact;
55. urges the importance of enhancing the capabilities of regions and cities to apply for the EU Mission funding and using the experiences of EU-financed, *large-scale* initiatives such as European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), Vanguard Initiative, Digitalising Cities, Open & Agile Smart Cities, City Science Initiative, and Living-in.EU (the European way of digital transformation in cities and communities). This will enhance the resilience, responsiveness and active participation of cities and regions in European reforms, and bolster inclusion of the citizens all over the EU. This in turn will act as a multiplier of the impact of EU initiatives and ensure a broader and fairer distribution of resources, so that conditions everywhere are better suited to raising funding from EU and non-EU sources and reaching the forefront of development;

Mission-specific recommendations

56. stresses the importance of cross-mission cooperation at all governance levels. The CoR emphasises that the EU Missions together have a clear joint focus in inventing a sustainable smart future. This can be manifested by addressing co-creation and RDI-based solutions:
- Climate adaptation: management of floods, forest fires and other disasters, nature-based solutions, climate proofing of critical infrastructure, systems to monitor and warn of any public health impact;
 - Cancer: health in general, increasing prevention measures, in particular by promoting healthy living habits;
 - Oceans and water: protecting and restoring aquatic ecosystems, reduction of pollution, and making the blue economy climate neutral;
 - Climate Neutral Cities: progress in cross-cutting environmental, infrastructure, and industrial solutions that contribute to cities' climate neutrality;
 - Soil: prevention of land-use pollution, and safeguarding in all circumstances fresh and healthy groundwater;

57. proposes the following mission-specific activities to increase the impact of the EU Missions:

a) Adaptation to Climate Change

The CoR emphasises that the Climate Adaptation Mission should have an essential overall role, especially on foresight and motivating all the actors of Europe to actively contribute to the EU Missions. This Mission should focus on social and societal awareness and to achieve a general commitment to create large-scale systematic solutions. In particular, it should address the challenges of the green transformation of industry, housing and mobility. The losses due to climate change already average 12 billion euros per year, and the EU should do macro-fiscal analyses on climate to convince accelerating adaptation measures parallel with mitigation. The approach to protecting people against climate change must also include social aspects and cohesion issues.

b) Cancer

The CoR highlights the importance of top global research and encourages researchers and innovators to increase European and cross-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders for the success of this Mission. The CoR stresses the importance of expanding HPV vaccination and biobanking and access to the most innovative therapies, as well as the importance of disseminating best practices among countries and regions. One of the main challenges is the disparities in access to cancer care between and within EU countries and regions, as well as the quality of life of patients. Therefore, improving access to early screening, new diagnostic tools, and innovative cancer treatments in European countries and regions is vital and requires investment in infrastructure, equipment, digital transformation of healthcare, healthcare workforce, and new care models. Another challenge is access to affordable treatment and medical products, as is the quality of individualised patient support and social innovation in support of carers.

c) Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030

The CoR highlights that the recovery of healthy oceans and waters and securing freshwater are the global questions of fate, short and long term. The pollution problems can only be solved by stressing the international dimension: the sea basin dimension such as the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Danube River basin, and increasing collaboration between regions. The particular focus on the Arctic is needed. The CoR calls for the sea and waters to become a new common ambition at the heart of the relaunch of the European project; it stresses that the specific focus on research and clean water technologies and on more efficient supply is vital for the Mission, as well as the blue ocean economy, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, decarbonisation of maritime transport and marine renewable energy. These will create new extensive opportunities for cross-border and out-of-the-box business collaboration. The CoR stresses the need to mobilise cities and regions to build European networks that bring local maritime innovation ecosystems together around value chains and create innovations in maritime industries.

d) Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities

The CoR urges that Europe needs active frontrunner cities to co-create new urgent solutions and share the results of their experiments with the others – all cities and regions throughout Europe need to be engaged and supported. The frontrunner cities should be used as innovation hubs co-creating replicable and directly applicable solutions to be scaled-up for all other European cities in their transition to climate neutrality by 2050. Cities that have applied but have not been selected should be brought together into an extended group by the EU Commission so that they can in many ways use the progress and outcomes of the frontrunner cities, including directly applying reproducible solutions. Already existing successful programmes and projects or related "green initiatives" are listed in the Addendum to this Mission's implementation plan. The lessons learnt should be taken as a basis for creating multilevel roadmaps towards the climate neutrality of cities. Multi-actor transformation communities with joint instruments should be applied, preventing every community from operating on its own. The CoR stresses the preparation of Climate City Contracts by participating cities as a demand-driven process that should allow for local solutions but needs strong support from the national and regional levels.

e) A Soil Deal for Europe

The CoR emphasises the need for systems thinking and instrumental transformation management, including RDI and learning, to reach the targets of the Soil Mission, which covers all types of land uses, and to explore new paths for a more ambitious EU CAP policy transformation. To increase carbon farming and carbon sequestration in forests, the re-designing of agricultural production systems and setting-up of transnational clusters of living labs are crucial for the success of the Mission. Supporting biodiversity and citizens' preference for forest-based bioproducts and sustainable and locally sourced food are necessary actions in rural and urban environments. Another vital point is how to make the forest activities attractive and economically sustainable without losing lucrativeness in supporting the Soil Mission targets.

The CoR's role in supporting a European and worldwide transformation

58. emphasises that the people live and work in the cities and regions and all EU Mission activities should focus on people: from business, academic and governmental stakeholders to individual citizens of all ages and backgrounds. The CoR, the JRC, and other relevant players know

diverse effective and proven technologies for citizen-participation, from entrepreneurial discovery to societal innovations camps to be employed to ensure citizens' engagement;

59. stands ready to deliver on reaching out to local communities to raise the awareness of the EU Missions as such and help them engage with Europe's citizens and businesses;
60. underlines that the EU Missions will be successful only if closing the knowledge and innovation divide in Europe and the innovation gap between Europe and the US are highlighted. The focus needs to be on ambitious concrete and inclusive real-life measures using the RDI outcomes;
61. stresses that the new developments in RDI are a requirement for the success of the EU Missions. This means new extensive solutions in ensuring complementarity and fostering synergies with the Union research and innovation framework programmes and other Union and global programmes and funds. A new step is piloting the system of ERA Hubs, which should promote the use of all relevant EU RDI initiatives as an essential part of regional policymaking;
62. points out that implementing the EU Missions will foster local and regional leadership within the EU, but also worldwide. The CoR in enhancing the role of cities and regions within the Covenant of Mayors and other global networks, should create synergy between the EU Missions and the UN SDG activities and campaigns Race to Zero and Race to Resilience. Reinforcing the global leadership of EU cities and regions can also support the effort of the CoR towards formal recognition of subnational governments in the UNFCCC framework and in preparing for the COP27;

Summing-up of the critical success factors

63. recalls that Europe needs to strengthen its global competitiveness based on knowledge, European-wide partnerships, capacities, and talents to work for the future – an inclusive approach to take everybody on board. Europe has an opportunity to take the role of a global leader implementing collaborative policies to achieve SDGs, and tackling climate change;
64. underlines that real-life action is the key for the EU Missions. Research is essential for creating new solutions and determining the best ways forward – the appropriate applications are vital for achieving results. The EU Missions will be successful if they meet a local enabling ecosystem. This is not just about technology and research; this is, above all, a human-centric approach building competencies, addressing local risks, and accessing the best European-wide resources. Human aspects in innovation are essential to co-creating sustainable solutions;
65. states that the EU Missions are essential in supporting Europe's transformation into a greener, healthier, more inclusive, and resilient continent. To reach the ambitious targets, each EU Mission needs to operate as an extensive portfolio of actions. These European portfolios need to be formed based on comprehensive regional and local orchestrated portfolios of actions, including integrated research projects, policy and legislative measures, and local implementation activities;

66. urges the need to co-finance and support the daily work of cities and regions in their value-creation and bench-learning to scale up the best processes and actions for the everyday well-being of citizens. The role of the demonstrator communities is to act as pioneers, developers, and frontline testers of systemic change for all the others;
67. is ready to cooperate with the EU Missions to make the benchmarking and bench-learning processes between demonstration cities/regions and others attractive. The financing instruments need to be flexible and innovative, and encourage the real interests of cities/regions;
68. highlights that the key questions are how the cities and regions learn to orchestrate necessary activities and how the activities attract private industrial and other investments. The ERA Hubs network ideally ensures that local and regional RDI ecosystems become an integrated part of the European-wide RDI ecosystem;
69. calls for better societal and technological predictability and increased collaboration as the critical success factors to accelerate industrial and other investments for reaching carbon neutrality and other EU Mission targets. The mission-oriented policy suits well in strengthening the bottom-up dimension in the EU's unique multilevel governance system: the lessons learned can and will be actively shared across the Member States. More substantial consideration and integration of the EU Missions' objectives within developing future legislation is necessary; carbon pricing and the Fit-for-55 package are examples of this;
70. highlights that the latest EU-level industrial and innovation policy guidelines, plans, and necessary new scientific and technologic knowledge and innovations need to be integrated into the EU Missions and developed and transferred to real-life solutions and practices by effective bottom-up knowledge management and other actions;
71. has acknowledged the need for the EU Mission digital platforms: to accelerate knowledge transfer and management, support virtual collaboration and partnership match-making, simplify funding processes, etc. These need to be co-created with the representatives of cities and regions;
72. sums up that new adequate and effective work processes are essential for ensuring the success of the EU Missions. These processes must reflect the lessons of Open Innovation 2.0, diverse Quadruple Helix initiatives, and many others in co-creating attractive next-generation participative governance. The full range of citizens must be involved, from youth to the elderly. The mission activities should consider various aspects of different generations and create innovative and responsible ways to achieve the engagement needed for inventing a sustainable future for Europe.

Brussels, 27 April 2022

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Blížkovský

II. PROCEDURE

Title	European Missions
Reference(s)	COM(2021) 609 final
Legal basis	Article 307 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Procedural basis	Rule 41(b)(i) of the CoR Rules of Procedure
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	
Date of Bureau/President's decision	
Commission responsible	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)
Rapporteur	Markku Markkula
Analysis	November 2021
Discussed in commission	13 December 2021
Date adopted by commission	15 February 2022
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	Majority
Adopted at plenary	27 April 2022
Previous Committee opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A new European Research Area (ERA) for research and innovation¹¹ – Regional Innovation Scoreboard and its impact in regional place-based policies¹² – Research infrastructures: The future of the European Research Area (ERA) from a regional and cross-border perspective¹³ – A renewed European agenda for research and innovation – Europe's chance to shape its future¹⁴ – Horizon Europe: The Framework Programme 9 for Research and Innovation¹⁵ – Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth¹⁶
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	N.A.

¹¹ CdR 4749/2020.

¹² CdR 517/2020.

¹³ CdR 896/2019.

¹⁴ CdR 3955/2018.

¹⁵ CdR 3891/2018.

¹⁶ CdR 4757/2017.