

## The participation of Emilia-Romagna Region in the EU decision-making process

### European Session 2021

#### Summary of the Resolution adopted by the Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna Region

On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021, at the end of the plenary European Session, the Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna Region voted the Resolution no. 3328 representing the policy-setting document addressed to the Regional Government for the effective participation of the Region to European policy-making process and for the adoption and implementation of European rules.

Hereinafter, a summary of the Resolution is reported.

Having regard to:

- national Law no. 234/2012 (*General provisions on Italy's participation in the elaboration and implementation of EU legislation and policies*);
- regional Law no. 16/2008, as modified in 2018 with Regional Law no. 6 (Provisions on Emilia-Romagna Region's participation in the elaboration and implementation of EU legislation and policies, on regional international activities and on its interregional relations. Enactment of articles no. 12, 13 and 25 of the Regional statute);
- the European Commission Work Programme 2021 "A Union of vitality in a world of fragility" – COM (2020)690 dated 19th October, 2020;
- the Annual explanatory report drawn up by the Regional Government for the European Session 2021 informing the Legislative Assembly about the European initiatives of interest to the Regional Government ("ascending phase") and the compliance of the regional law system to



- the European law (“descending phase”) (Regional Government Resolution no. 342 adopted on 15th March 2021);
- the Report of the European Session preparatory activities drafted by the First Standing Committee, in charge of the European affairs, completed with the outcome of the Hearing of the regional stakeholders on the Commission Work Programme 2021 and the positions expressed by Standing Committees in their own field of competence.

With reference to the participation to the European policy-making process (“ascending phase”), Emilia-Romagna Region has expressed its own interest in the following European acts and proposals announced by the European Commission in its 2021 Work Programme:

### **A European Green Deal**

1. Fit for 55% package
2. Circular economy package
3. Biodiversity and toxic-free environment package
4. Sustainable and smart mobility

### **A Europe Fit for the Digital Age**

5. Europe’s digital decade
6. Data package
9. Platform workers
10. Industrial strategy for Europe

### **An Economy that Works for People**

15. Sustainable corporate governance
18. Fair economy package



## **A Stronger Europe in the World**

- 26. Southern Neighbourhood
- 28. Research, innovation, education and youth

## **Promoting our European Way of Life**

- 31. European biomedical research and development
- 32. European health data space
- 36. Follow-up to the European Education Area and the updated skills agenda
- 37. EU strategy on combating antisemitism

## **A New Push for European Democracy**

- 38. Rights of children
- 39. Preventing and combating specific forms of gender-based violence
- 40. Fighting hate crime and hate speech
- 42. Transparency and democracy package
- 43. Long-term vision for rural areas
- 44. EU disability strategy

About **Fit for 55% package** (objective no. 1), the Legislative Assembly considers the reduction of gas emissions to at least 55% below 1990 levels by 2030, a very ambitious challenge for the future of Europe, for this reason it is very important to do whatever it takes to achieve this target. Furthermore, the Legislative Assembly welcomes the European Commission's proposal to act in an integrated way on different areas: energy, construction, mobility for a sustainable development from an environmental, economic, and social point of view. In order to share a common vision of the future and promote the green transition, at the end of 2020 Emilia-Romagna Region signed the Regional Pact for Labour and Climate together with Municipalities, Universities, economic, social and environmental stakeholders aimed to get 100% renewable energy by 2035.



As it is a very ambitious and challenging target, it will be necessary to support the development of renewable energy sources by removing all bureaucratic constraints and adopting incentive mechanisms too. The green transition should be associated with technological neutrality to avoid dogmatic position that could affect our economy and businesses. For example, thanks to our agro-industrial system, our country can be leader in the bio and methane gas production.

The ecological transition shall be the main driver for the post pandemic economic recovery. With reference to the air quality of the Po river basin, one of the most polluted European areas, it shall be strategic to draft, together with the other interested Regions (Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto), an extraordinary agreement to speed up integrated activities and implement a green development model aimed to create good wealth and jobs, according to Agenda 2030. In 2017, Emilia-Romagna Region with the Environment Ministry and the above-mentioned Regions signed the “Po river basin Agreement” to implement shared measures and optimize the effectiveness of the air pollution prevention and control policies. Despite the joint efforts and the slight improvement of the air quality, the situation is always critical especially with reference to PM10 and ozone pollution; for speeding up the improvement of the air quality and considering the European financial opportunities, financial resources should be provided.

With reference to the regional ceramic sector, special attention must be paid to the revision of the ETS directive. Even if ETS mechanism is valid, it should be adjusted with new standards to boost the energy transition and support the domestic ceramic industries.

Referring to **Circular economy package** (objective no. 2), Emilia-Romagna Region firmly believes in opportunities arising from the circular economy model (the Regional law no. 16/2015 supports circular economy, recycling and reusing of waste materials as energy resources). The revision of Directive 94/62/CE is positively considered, but a real development of circular economy is possible only making the secondary raw material, that



is the recovered and regenerated material, attractive also by financial incentives.

Circular economy shall be an opportunity for the transition of production processes and the supply chain valorisation with reference to new material and waste management innovation.

With reference to **Biodiversity and toxic-free environment package** (objective no. 3), included in the “Farm to fork strategy”, the Emilia-Romagna Region welcomes the proposal to redesign the framework supporting a more sustainable and healthy food system, but at the same time thinks that the strategy is too general and doesn’t consider the production processes: reducing the environmental impact of agriculture, improving animal welfare, reducing the need for medication are shareable objectives, but they can be achieved only after a technical and impact evaluation, to avoid a very strong effect on the European production capacity. Furthermore, in this context, the following initiatives are considered very interesting: b) Minimising the risk of deforestation and forest degradation associated with products placed on the EU market; c) Zero pollution action plan for water, air and soil; d) New legal framework on the restoration of healthy ecosystems.

Water stress is a problem affecting more and more Regions, also due to climate change: for this reason, a stronger action for a more efficient use of the water is needed.

Referring to **Sustainable and smart mobility** (objective no. 4), the debate highlighted the role of the private citizens and for this reason, in this first phase, it should be necessary to provide incentives to support both the conversion of vehicles towards methane gas or LPG fuel and the electric reconversion of the following international category vehicles M1, M1G, M2, M2G, M3, M3G, N1 and N1G, N2, N3.

With reference to the **Europe’s digital decade** (objective no. 5), the Communication “2030 Digital compass: the European way for the digital decade” is particularly important for the regional context. On this topic the



Emilia-Romagna Region has recently voted the “2020-2025 Regional Digital Agenda – ADER”, that is perfectly consistent with the European strategy, starting from the importance of digital competences and infrastructures for a digitalised economy and society based on solidarity, sustainability and empowerment of citizens and businesses. Furthermore, one of the main consequences of the Covid-19 has been the new digital divide that has emerged above all in the educational field. In 2020 the Emilia-Romagna Region implemented several policies to contrast children and teenagers’ educational poverty and prevent the social withdrawal and the Hikikomori phenomenon, also taking advantages of the European funds flexibility introduced by the European Commission.

Great interest has also been expressed for the initiatives related to **Data package** (objective no. 6) and **European health data space** (objective no. 32), but if on one side they will give the opportunity to improve the health care system quality, on the other side, it will be necessary to balance the individual interest with those of the community through the regulation of a difficult issue, such as the protection of personal data.

About **Industrial strategy for Europe** (objective no. 10), it has been stressed that SMEs are the beating heart of the European economy and, for this reason, they should be adequately supported with *ad hoc* financial instruments as they have greater difficulties than larger companies to get access to finance. For this purpose it would be necessary to address EBA to extend the flexibility regime on bank loan scheme due to June 2021, at least until the end of the year. Furthermore, it is necessary to extend the EBA public guarantee to the European banks from the current 6 years to 15 years at least so to let SMEs diluting their financial commitments over a longer period.

On this topic, in March 2021 Legislative Committees called specific hearings of the regional stakeholders and the debate pointed out that in Emilia-Romagna there are 450.000 enterprises affected by the new EU insolvency rules. It is very important to give stakeholders all useful information to raise awareness of the consequences of the new rules and, at the same time, ask



banks to carefully evaluate every single situation in order not to worsen the companies' economic conditions and avoid credit crunches that, in this post-pandemic period, could be a serious problem for the economic recovery.

Moreover, to boost the economy, it is essential to urge the Italian Government so that, during the presidency of the G20, it pushes European Commission and International bodies for the best solution to increase the production and distribution of anti-Covid19 vaccines. In this regard, the article no. 31 of the Trade - Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) provides that, in case of emergency, WTO Member States have the right to use a patent without any authorization from the right holder under an adequate remuneration and, were this provision implemented, a great number of vaccines could be produced and exported to countries with no facilities to produce them. Another possibility would be supporting companies in making agreements with qualified companies to implement, nowadays, the vaccine production and face the emergency. In the future, thanks to these agreements, industries could be more adequate to produce old and new vaccines.

The above-mentioned Regional Pact for Labour and Climate is consistent with the European industrial strategy regarding both the climate neutrality target by 2050 and the transition to environmentally and socially sustainable economy. For this purpose, it is crucial to coordinate programmes, projects, and interventions under the 2021-2027 Smart Specialization Strategy (S3). The S3 represents the framework supporting the strategies for the economic development with an overall vision of the regional system. In addition to the results gained in the previous programming period, the new S3 should consider the development of technology, industries, regional research ecosystem and, in particular, the new global challenges set out by European Union and Agenda 2030, to optimize the use of European and National Funds for R&I, and to divert resources to technological innovations processes, in particular to 5G, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.





On the same topic, in order to help SMEs to remain competitive on national and international markets it will be important to have a more efficient Public Administration, simplify procedures and promote the qualification of the education and training system for spreading innovation and digitalization knowledge to redesign logistic services, subcontracting supply chain and the same way of doing business.

Furthermore, also the tertiary sector SMEs shall be supported as they were strongly impacted by the strategies implemented to face the pandemic. These small and micro enterprises contribute significantly to the economy with genuine and high-quality products, furthermore they play an important role in hindering virtual relationships and individual segregation. During the debate special attention has been drawn to the fashion industry, which is a traditionally female industry and, in the current economic crisis, it needs *ad hoc* financial aids.

Referring to **Sustainable corporate governance** (objective no. 15), it is necessary to refer the sustainability concept not only to Green Deal strategy, but also to equal opportunities in the corporate governance to get anti-discrimination organisations inspired by a European Women New Deal to fully implement the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, in compliance with Objective no. 5 of the UN 2030 Agenda.

It is also necessary to strengthen the protection system against violence and harassment in workplaces, according to the Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) no. 190/2000 ratified by the Italian Parliament, as violence and harassment have a negative impact on labour organization, relationships, and companies' reputation and, therefore, they are incompatible with the development of sustainable enterprises.

With reference to **Fair economy package** (objective no. 18), it is important to fully implement the European Pillar of Social Rights so not to leave anyone behind, as it is an opportunity to get social equity stronger in the green and digital transition.





About **Southern Neighbourhood** (Objective no. 26), Emilia-Romagna Region plays a very active role in the field of international cooperation policies and in 2020 launched several projects to foster a share vision making to identify the more adequate answers to health, social, economic and value challenges. With reference to the European Territorial Cooperation, it has to be underlined that Emilia-Romagna Region has been re-confirmed Managing Authority of the Adrion Programme also for the 2021-2027 programming period. The Emilia-Romagna Region will be the reference point for nine States (four European member states: Italy, Croatia, Greece, Slovene, and five in pre-accession phase: Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and will have to manage resources amounting to 120 million Euros to finance projects carried out by a multinational partnership, with the collaboration of public and private entities with the aim of expanding investment opportunities in all territories involved.

Referring to **European biomedical research and development** (objective no. 31), the European Commission's proposal to set up a new biomedical research agency modelled on US Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) has been welcomed by Emilia-Romagna Region where an important biomedical district is located, on which substantial resources have been invested to support the research, with attention to biocompatibility too.

With reference to **Follow-up to the European Education Area and the updated skills agenda** (objective no. 36), considering the green and digital transition and the consequences of the Covid19 pandemic, this is a fundamental objective to be pursued with great energy to fully implement the first European pillar of social rights, which underlines that everyone has the right to a quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning.

As regards the **Rights of children** (objective no. 38), it has been stressed that sport and leisure centres play a key role in learning process, with special reference to the acquisition of social skills. It has been demonstrated



that leisure and sport activities have a positive effect, especially for children with a disadvantaged background. Unfortunately, certain groups of children cannot afford these activities, or their participation is hampered by the lack of infrastructures, poor accessibility or language problems. For these reasons, one of the main targets is giving disadvantaged children the opportunity to take part in sport and leisure activities, with a special attention to girls.

With reference to **Preventing and combating specific forms of gender-based violence** (objective no. 39), it has been underlined that, during the pandemic lockdown, domestic violence increased because anti-covid rules forbade women to go out. In that context, Emilia-Romagna Region had immediately set up policies to support women victims of violence and their children, for example by strengthening the prevention and territorial network assistance, financing actions to foster the housing autonomy and the independence of the victims of violence or supporting information centres for violent men.

Referring to the gender equality, in 2020 Emilia-Romagna Region focused on policies ensuring women equal participation and opportunities in the labour market to avoid that Covid negative consequences worsen the existing gender gap to the detriment of the achieved results.

## **The participation of Emilia-Romagna Region in the EU decision-making process**

### **The ascending phase**

Following the conclusions of the 2020 European Session (Resolution no. 1817 voted on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020) and under the national law no. 234/2012 which regulates the coordination mechanism between the national and regional level, on 22nd March 2021 the Emilia-Romagna Region expressed its observations on COM(2021) 44 final “Europe’s beating cancer plan” through a Resolution approved by the First Committee, on the basis of the opinion delivered by the Fourth Committee on Health and Social Policies at



the meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021, in which Mrs. Alessandra Moretti, Member of the European Parliament's Special Committee on Beating Cancer, took part.

Furthermore, during the 2021 European Session, the Fourth Committee on Health and Social Policies, took the opportunity to participate in the public consultation related to the Green Paper on Ageing publishing in the platform "have your say" its considerations with a view to promote active ageing.

### **The working method**

Pursuant to art. 3 ter (Participation) of the Regional law no. 16/2008, the First Committee, in charge of the European affairs, has the duty to present the European Commission Annual work programme to the regional stakeholders. For this purpose, it calls the Hearing and, in that occasion, it collects suggestions and advice that will be considered by the Committees in their political analysis.

In 2021 the Hearing took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> March and, thanks to the collaboration with European Parliament Information Office in Milan, the following Members of European Parliament attended the meeting: Mrs. Rosanna Conte, Mr. Paolo Borchia and Mrs. Elisabetta Gualmini.

Furthermore, the above-mentioned art. 3 ter provides that on the European initiatives and proposals pointed out in the Resolution approved for the European Session, the Regional Government and the Legislative Assembly of the Emilia-Romagna Region promote, also through IT technology, consultations, involving the European Regional Network. At present the members of the European Regional Network are the subscribers of the Regional Pact for Labour and Climate and the Regional Unions of Municipalities. Through the consultations, the members of the Network will actively participate to the ascending phase of the European decision-



making process, contributing to the definitions of the Emilia-Romagna Region's position.

Following the debate, the European initiatives pointed out for the consultations are the following:

- 1) Data Act** (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Article 114 TFEU, Q3 2021)  
– Objective no. 6 **Data package**
- 2) Proposal to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence** (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Articles 82(2), 83 and 84 TFEU, Q4 2021) – Objective no. 39 **Preventing and combating specific forms of gender-based violence**

The consultations will be carried on the Regional e-democracy platform “ioPartecipo+”.

Moreover, since the launch by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the pilot phase of the RegHUB project in January 2019, Emilia-Romagna Region has been a contact point of the Network of Regional Hubs for the EU Policy Implementation Review and has carried out the consultations proposed by CoR.

### **Other experiences of participatory democracy**

During the Conference on the future of Europe, the Legislative Assembly is playing a very important role as the Europe Direct Centre of the Legislative Assembly is hub of the Conference and is going to coordinate the activities foreseen on the territory, in agreement with the European Commission Directorate-General for Communication.

More information on Emilia-Romagna Region participation activities in the EU decision-making process are available on

<https://www.assemblea.emr.it/lassemblea-in-europa>

