



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Commission for Economic Policy
(ECON)**

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MEETING OF THE COMMISSION FOR ECONOMIC POLICY

– 2 MARCH 2020 –

AGENDA ITEM 5

**2020 Action Plan for cooperation between the European Committee of the Regions
and the European Investment Bank Group**

For adoption

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1. Background information on relations between the CoR and the EIB Group

The European Investment Bank Group consists of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

Through its financing (mainly loans but also guarantees and equity, including also intermediated lending for the benefit of small and medium-sized businesses and mid-caps), its blending activities and advisory services, the EIB works with many of Europe's regions and local authorities (LRAs), thus helping to deliver growth, jobs, cohesion and a just transition while delivering on climate action and environmental sustainability as the EU climate bank, including through its key role in implementing the Investment Plan for Europe, and the InvestEU programme.

The EIF has been part of the EIB group since 2000. Its central mission is to support Europe's small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) by helping them to access finance. To this end, the EIF designs a wide range of innovative financial products addressed to its partners (e.g. banks, guarantee, leasing and microfinance institutions, private equity and venture capital funds) which act as financial intermediaries for the EIF.

In light of this, the political relations between the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Investment Bank have intensified in recent years. After joint events and fruitful debates in 2012, 2013 and 2014, the CoR and the EIB Group decided to establish a more structured form of cooperation in 2015 through a joint Action Plan for cooperation. This Action Plan was then renewed in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, allowing for a further strengthening of collaboration between the CoR and EIB in all investment-related policy fields and debates.

Continuing this successful cooperation, and reaffirming the good working relations between the CoR and the EIB Group, a renewed Action Plan for 2020 is proposed, consisting of a broad range of possible joint activities (*see Appendix*). As in previous years, the shared objective of planning common activities is to strengthen awareness, find synergies and ultimately help deliver high-quality EU-supported projects that benefit citizens and businesses alike. Thanks to this initiative, the CoR will support Europe's local and regional authorities by helping to mobilise the EIB Group's expertise in addressing their needs.

2. Areas of cooperation between the EIB Group and the CoR

The CoR and the EIB Group share the objective of helping to deliver economic growth and job creation and to favour convergence across the EU's cities and regions. To this end, and given the expertise and the role of each institution, the proposed actions for 2020 cover the following areas:

- ✓ **Overarching actions** aiming to strengthen working relations and cooperation between the two institutions across policy fields.
- ✓ **Economic Policy, Finance and Investment, Sustainable Development Goals**
- ✓ **Cohesion Policy, EU budget, and the Urban Agenda**

- ✓ **Climate finance, Energy, Biodiversity**
- ✓ **Employment, Social Economy, Research and Innovation**
- ✓ **Neighbourhood and migration**

Cooperation in other areas not envisaged in the Action Plan can be pursued on an ad-hoc basis where relevant.

3. Main tools for cooperation

The main tools for cooperation set out in the action plan are:

- ✓ Participation in meetings at political level: EIB Group representatives will be invited to CoR commission meetings or plenary sessions.
- ✓ Close cooperation between EIB Group specialists and CoR rapporteurs: EIB Group input into the preparatory work on CoR opinions will continue.
- ✓ Events, seminars, meetings and training in the areas of cooperation: several instances of EIB Group participation in CoR events are planned in the course of 2020.
- ✓ Regular exchange of information on initiatives and other activities carried out by each institution, including political and analytical content wherever relevant.
- ✓ Joint communication activities in particular reaching out to local and regional authorities across the European Union

PROPOSAL

Members of the ECON Commission are invited to adopt this document.

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N.B. Appendix overleaf.

Appendix:

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The table below presents the actions envisaged in various fields in 2020 as part of the cooperation between the EIB Group and the CoR:

1. <u>Overarching actions</u>
1.1. Participation of the EIB President or other high-level representative in a plenary session of the CoR (date tbd). At the beginning of the new five-year CoR term of office, this would be framed in the context of an agenda item dedicated to the EIB Group and to the EIB-CoR cooperation, in particular since 2020 marks five years of structured EIB-CoR cooperation (the first EIB-CoR Action Plan dates from March 2015). A topical debate could also be envisaged, for example in relation to the EIB's role in the implementation of Cohesion Policy, the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan in the context of the Green Deal, and of the EIB's ambition to become Europe's "Climate Bank".
1.2. Official presentation and adoption of the EIB-CoR joint action plan for 2020 at the CoR ECON commission meeting on 2 March 2020.
1.3. Maintaining an informal but regular channel for communication between the CoR and the EIB Group via the office of the EIB Group Permanent Representative in Brussels, including monitoring of the action plan.
1.4. Involvement of the EIB Group in a coordinated manner for various inputs in statutory activities of the CoR (plenaries, commissions and political groups meetings) as well for media and communication activities, such as the October 2020 European Week of Regions and Cities in order to ensure that the EIB Group is able to provide input and expertise where relevant.
1.5. The EIB Group will continue its close involvement in EuroPCom , the EU communication conference, and its advisory board, following the 2018 and 2019 editions of the conference in which EIB representatives took part and for which the EIB provided financial support.
1.6. A group of relevant CoR staff could take part in a training visit to the EIB Group headquarters in order to learn more about its functioning, its role and in particular its work with local and regional authorities.

2. Economic Policy, Finances and Investment, Sustainable Development Goals

- 2.1. The EIB will play an important role in the European Commission's proposal for a **Sustainable Europe Investment Plan**. Following the practice established with the European Fund for Strategic Investments and later the InvestEU programme, the CoR will seek to cooperate closely with the EIB in the interinstitutional debates surrounding the design and implementation of this Plan, in particular in the context of the CoR's consultative works. The CoR and EIB could also cooperate in order to promote the programme to local and regional authorities.
- In parallel, cooperation should continue with regards to the **InvestEU Programme**: ahead of its launch in 2021 an event or conference could be organised in 2020 to highlight the opportunities for cities and regions. The interlinkage between InvestEU and the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan is also a topic of interest for the CoR, as is the issue of administrative capacity at local and regional level in relation to accessing the EIB's products and services.
- 2.2. **Industry, SME and entrepreneurship policy** is a possible field of cooperation for ECON and the EIB Group in 2020. In particular, ECON would involve the EIB Group in events it will organise related to these issues and in its opinion work, where EIB Group expertise in matters of access to finance is relevant. Specific topics to explore in this regard are, for example, digitisation, green entrepreneurship or "industry 4.0".
- 2.3. The CoR will continue in 2020 its work on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, their integration into the EU policy framework, and the crucial role of local and regional authorities in their implementation. In this context the CoR and the EIB group could work together to inform local and regional authorities on the tools, programmes and financing instruments that exist to support them. The CoR and the EIB could bring their expertise together through a joint brochure outlining some best practices and financing opportunities, or through the organisation of a joint event.
- 2.4. Given the role of the ECON Commission as coordinator of the relations between the CoR and EIB Group, a **visit to the EIB headquarters** could be organised for a small group of ECON members, for instance the chair, vice-chairs and coordinators. As was the case with the previous visit in 2015, this would allow, at the start of a new CoR term of office, links and cooperation between the two institutions.

3. Cohesion Policy, EU budget, and the Urban Agenda

- 3.1. In the context of the **Implementation of the Urban Agenda** for the EU, COTER plans to invite the EIB Group colleagues to present the implementation assessment of the URBIS initiative.
- 3.2. In relation to the anticipated **Just Transition Mechanism**, to be partly co-financed by the EIB, representatives of the EIB could be invited to present the EIB role within the mechanism to the COTER members.

3.3.	A "lunchtime briefing" or other similar event aimed at local and regional representatives in Brussels to present practical arrangements linked to the Just Transition Mechanism , in particular advisory services of the EIB and their support to beneficiaries from the Just Transition Fund. As part of the presentation, a brief description of necessary administrative steps could be provided, if applicable.
3.4.	In 2016, the EIBG and the CoR published a very successful brochure about urban financing on the occasion of the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam (Urban Agenda for the EU). It could be envisaged to update this brochure (e.g. on the occasion of the adoption of the new Leipzig Charter).
3.5.	In view of the next programming period, the EIBG could provide information to the CoR about Cohesion policy and the main achievements carried out in the 2014-2020 period. The EIBG could highlight what could be implemented in the future (with a focus on the main policy objectives of the Cohesion policy i.e. "smarter and greener" Europe).

4.	<u>Climate finance, Energy, Biodiversity</u>
4.1.	Continued dialogue on presenting the EIB as a Climate Bank and expanding the opportunities for local and regional authorities to access the EIB Group's financial instruments for climate mitigation and adaptation by analysing existing technical, procedural and eligibility obstacles.
4.2.	Mutual participation in seminars/events on climate finance with presentation of the EIB Group financial instruments and gathering of information on local and regional authorities' needs and viewpoints.
4.3.	Cooperation in the field of the Smart finance for Smart buildings initiative where the EIB Group is involved in the preparation along with DG ENER and DG REGIO of the EC and of other activities related to funding energy efficiency in buildings . Cooperation could also be envisaged in the context of the "open platform" on renovation announced by the EC in the Green Deal Communication.
4.4.	In the context of the Covenant of Mayors and financing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) inside the EU, EIB Group representatives (including both climate and relevant sector experts) could be invited to relevant meetings to discuss financing opportunities linked to sustainable energy/energy efficiency/adaptation/low carbon transport actions carried out at local and regional level. In particular, the EIB could cooperate in some of the side-events of the Covenant of Mayors Ceremony being co-hosted by the CoR on 4 March 2020.
4.5.	In the context of the ENVE forum discussing implementation of Green Deal actions and initiatives (forum to be established in 2020), the EIB could take part in the sessions related to finance.

4.6. In the context of the ENVE activities **in monitoring climate-related best practices of members**, the EIB could cooperate in providing non-confidential information on best practices.

5. **Employment, Social Economy, Research and Innovation**

5.1. The participation of the EIB in CoR seminars or events on **workers' rights** in the digital economy should be envisaged, with a presentation of the EIB Group's financial instruments for the digital economy projects and on how to expand the opportunities for local and regional authorities to access the EIB Group's financial instruments.

5.2. The participation of the EIB in CoR seminars or events on **youth employment** should be envisaged given the EIB's role (EIB unlocks 2 billion euros for young farmers across Europe / "Skills and Jobs – investing in Youth" programme). Access to finance is crucial and also an obstacle for young people.

5.3. The SEDEC Commission is organising a conference in Mannheim in November 2020 on the theme of **Social Economy** in which representatives of the EIB Group could take part to discuss with local and regional authorities the financing opportunities for SMEs active in the social economy.

5.4. Cooperation between the EIB and CoR should also be envisaged in the field of **research and innovation**. The CoR would have an interest in how the EIB could support investments in regional innovation ecosystems. In real terms, it could be set as a priority to develop cross-border and intra-regional research and innovation infrastructures, which could be jointly used by companies and researchers from a number of Member States and regions.

5.5. Cooperation could also be envisaged with the ENVE commission on the financial support for local and regional authorities in the implementation of the post-2020 EU strategy, and the identification of the criteria to define **biodiversity**-proof investments.

5.6. Cooperation in the field of cross-border investment projects and cross-border innovative instruments (to be possibly combined with 5.4).

6. **Neighbourhood and migration**

6.1. In the policy field of Neighbourhood Policy: the organisation of specific **seminars on geographic areas** concerning the **EAP, ARLEM and/or EU enlargement countries (targeted funding**, either multi-beneficiary or country focus) together by the EIB Group and CoR could be envisaged.

6.2. Cooperation within the framework of the Urban Agenda Partnership on **Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees** should be continued.