

Social Europe and demographic change, high priorities for SEDEC in 2020



□□□The European Committee of the Regions' SEDEC commission began its new term of office with a discussion on the European Commission's initiatives for strengthening the social dimension of the European Union. At the meeting on 24 February, members also adopted an opinion which urges to tackle demographic challenges at all levels of government and across EU policies. These two topics are among the top priorities in the SEDEC [2020 work programme](#).

The European Commission published in January the communication [A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions](#), which sets the general framework for upcoming legislative initiatives in the field of social policy, such as those linked to fair minimum wages, a European unemployment re-insurance scheme and a renewed youth guarantee. **Joost Korte**, European Commission Director-General for Employment and Social Affairs, underlined the need to respond to rapid changes driven by climate change and digitalisation, together with demography (depopulation) and the impacts of globalisation. He also raised the question on the status of platform workers.

Anne Karjalainen (FI/PES), Kerava City Councillor, who was elected Chair of SEDEC earlier in February at the beginning of CoR's new 5-year term of office, said: "Implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights means ensuring a decent standard of living for all, increasing the number of people at work and offering quality jobs, taking appropriate measures to reduce poverty, protecting the youth and ensuring equal opportunities for all. These are objectives that regions and cities share. In this regard, better monitoring at local and regional level is crucial for the formulation of effective policies to attain these objectives."

Later this year, the European Commission will publish a new report on the impacts of demographic change and a Green Paper on Ageing. The CoR draft opinion [Demographic change: Proposals on measuring and tackling its negative effects in EU regions](#) warns that Europe's ageing population, low birth rates and the worsening unequal distribution of the population require a coherent policy response at all levels of governance and across all EU policies. The recommendations drafted by rapporteur **János Ádám Karácsony** (HU/EPP), Member of Tahitótfalu local government, will be adopted at the next CoR plenary session on 25-26 March.

□Furthermore, the SEDEC commission is preparing opinions on the [Regional Innovation Scoreboard](#), which provides a comparative assessment of research and innovation performance across the EU, and on the European Commission's recently published [White Paper on Artificial Intelligence](#). The rapporteurs for these opinions are, respectively, **Mikel Irujo** (ES/EA), Director-General for External Action of the Government of Navarre, and **Guido Rink** (NL/PES), alderman of Emmen.□

Action against human trafficking and pimping in Romania and Spain

[ES](#)

24 February 2020

Authorities in Romania and Spain have taken action against an Organised Criminal Group (OCG) suspected of human trafficking, pimping and money laundering. In parallel coordinated operations, four suspects have been arrested and six locations searched. Seven victims of Romanian origin were brought to safety, among them two minors. Approximately EUR 58 000 in cash, as well as three properties, two luxury cars and mobile phones and phone cards were seized.

✘ The OCG members allegedly collected, transported and housed their victims and forced them into prostitution in Romania and Spain. The members' regular movements made it more difficult for law enforcement and judicial authorities to react accordingly and required constant coordination, with Eurojust playing a key role. A coordination meeting took place at Eurojust in November 2019.

The operation was led by the Galati Territorial Office of the Directorate for Investigation of Organised Crime and Terrorism and the Investigative Court number 14 in Romania, together with the Provincial Prosecutor's Office in Málaga, Spain. It was successfully carried out thanks to cooperation between the Galati County Police Inspectorate in Romania, Galati County Gendarmes Inspectorate, and Romanian National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons, with the support of the Special Operations Brigade of Galati and Spanish *Policia Nacional*, assisted by the Attaché of the Minister of Interior at the Spanish Embassy in Bucharest. Officers of the *Policia Nacional* attended the investigations in Romania.

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[Programming document 2020-22](#)

EMCDDA, Lisbon, February 2020

Summary

The Programming Document 2020-22 translates the long-term priorities defined by the EMCDDA Strategy 2025 into short-term operational priorities. The year 2020 marks the end of the first strategic roadmap and the beginning of the second one (towards 2025) and is a time for mid-term assessment and reflection on the way ahead. Main activities include the continuation of two projects aimed at partnership with third countries – the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Project 7 and the EU4Monitoring Drugs project – the

release of a reshaped European Drug Report and the ESPAD report, as well as the ongoing delivery of value to our stakeholders. We will also be celebrating '25 years of drug monitoring' and consolidating our position as the leading European source of information on drugs.

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Table of contents

- Foreword by the EMCDDA Director
- Mission statement
- Section I: General context
- Section II: Multiannual programming 2020–22
- Section III: EMCDDA work programme 2020
- Annexes

Main subject:

[EMCDDA](#)

[European Cooperation stakeholders meet at EUIPO](#)

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