

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.□