

Text adopted by the plenary session

of the resolution

on the opening of a political dialogue with the European Commission on region-specific analyses, statistics and recommendations in the framework of the European Semester

The Flemish Parliament,

- considering:

1° the coalition agreement of the Flemish Government 2019-2024. In the coalition agreement the EU-institutions (EU: European Union) are asked to provide information directly to Flanders as much as possible, as well as the EU is asked to monitor Flemish policy, budget and operational programmes as much as possible separately and also to monitor the country-specific recommendations within the framework of the European Semester as much as possible at the level of the regions. In the Coalition Agreement, the Flemish Government indicates that it will continue to press for the further refinement of regional statistics by national and international institutions, for the faster and more frequent updating of already existing regional statistics, and for the addition of regional dimensions in existing datasets and future studies;

2° the policy paper on Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation 2019-2024 (Parl.St. VI.Parl. 2019-20, no. 122/1), which makes it clear that Flanders and the European Union - where possible - can best interact directly with each other. Flanders indicates that it will further strengthen and deepen the follow-up of the European Semester, and that it will ensure that Flemish policies, figures and statistics are shared to the maximum extent possible. This can contribute to the fact that the Flemish policy data provided will be taken into account even more strongly in the European Commission's semester documents and that the European Commission will assess the Flemish policy programmes, including the Flemish Reform Programme, as much as possible separately and also to monitor the country-specific recommendations to a maximum extent at the level of the federated entities;

3° the memorandum of the Flemish Government 'Vision on the future of the European Union' (Parl.St. VI.Parl. 2016-17, no. 1073/1), which explicitly states that the country-specific recommendations should henceforth take into account the institutional structure of the Member States;

4° the note to the Flemish Government 'Reinforcing the EU reflex in Flanders', which highlights the good practice of the Flemish Reform Programme;

5° the unanimously adopted resolution of the Flemish Parliament by Karl Vanlouwe, Peter Van Rompuy, Rik Daems, Axel Ronse, Ward Kennes and Jos Lantmeeters concerning region-specific analyses and recommendations within the framework of the European Semester (Parl.St.VI.Parl. 2016-17, no. 1031/3);

6° Flanders' follow up of the integration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the European Semester;

7° Article 4 of the Treaty on the European Union, which states that the Union shall respect the basic political and constitutional structures of its Member States, including those for regional and local self-government;

8° the Athens Declaration of the Committee of the Regions, which requests that the country-specific recommendations of the European Commission take into account the distribution of powers and territorial diversity in the Member States;

9° the report entitled 'A Code of Conduct on the involvement of the Local and Regional Authorities in the European Semester' of the European Committee of the Regions, which addresses the lack of a territorial dimension in the European Semester and proposes to strengthen the involvement of local and regional authorities;

- considering that:

1° in the Belgian institutional structure there is no hierarchy between the federal and the federated state levels;

2° Belgium stated in Declaration 51, which was annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon, that, in accordance with its constitutional law, not only the Chamber of Representatives and Senate of the Federal Parliament but also the parliamentary assemblies of the communities and the regions act, in terms of the competences exercised by the Union, as components of the national parliamentary system or as chambers of the national parliament;

3° foreign policy in Belgium is conducted according to the 'in foro interno, in foro externo'-principle, whereby the competent level within Belgium for a matter is also competent at international level.

4° Flanders is fully engaged in the cycle of the European Semester;

5° the Flemish Government shall annually draw up its own Flemish Reform Programme in the framework of the European Semester that fully complies with all the form and content requirements that also apply to the Member States;

6° the Committee for General Policy, Finance and Budget, together with the Committee for Foreign Policy, European Affairs, International Cooperation and Tourism of the Flemish Parliament play an important role in the European Semester, whereby an exchange of views on the draft text of the Flemish Reform Programme is organized;

7° Flanders shall participate in bilateral meetings with the European Commission in the context of the European Semester at the political level;

8° Flanders shall provide the European Commission with relevant socio-economic data and information in the context of the fact-finding missions of the European Commission in the framework of the European semester;

9° Flanders, in cooperation with the Flemish-European Liaison Agency (VLEVA), shall in the context of the European Semester hold annual consultations with relevant stakeholders such as (supra)local authorities and civil society organisations;

10° country-specific analyses often do not correspond to the socio-economic reality in the Belgian regions, which also leads to policy recommendations that do not prove to be accurate or efficient for those regions and, moreover, do not lead to the empowerment of the competent policy level;

11° region-specific analyses would correspond much better to the socioeconomic reality in the Belgian regions, which would also lead to policy recommendations that are much more accurate or efficient for these regions and that would also lead to a more responsive policy, and, moreover, would lead to the empowerment of the competent policy level;

12° the European Commission has already made efforts to convert the Flemish input into region-specific analyses in the so-called country reports within the framework of the European Semester;

13° despite all the efforts made by Flanders to fully participate in the European Semester, the conversion of the Flemish input into region-specific recommendations in the framework of the European Semester by the European Commission and the Council of the EU proves to be insufficient;

14° good practices exist whereby international institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) make detailed measurements and recommendations at the regional level;

15° there are good practices whereby the European Commission works with regional data, analyses and recommendations, as is, for example, the case in the Education and Training Monitor for Belgium;

- calls upon the European Commission to:

1° in the context of the European Semester, both in the country reports and country-specific recommendations to work as much as possible with region-specific analyses, statistics and recommendations, in general for all regions with legislative powers that register in the process of the European Semester, and especially for Flanders;

2° urge the Council of the EU to work as much as possible with region-specific analyses, statistics and recommendations within the framework of the European Semester;

- calls upon the European Commission to examine this proposal for a resolution within the framework of the political dialogue and to indicate in what way it will take it into account;

- asks the Speaker of the Flemish Parliament to forward this proposal for a resolution to the European Commission.