



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

*Brussels, 21.10.2022
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Dear Presidents,

The Commission would like to thank the Vlaams Parlement – in its capacity as a component of the Belgian national parliamentary system, as mentioned in the Declaration no. 51 annexed to the Treaties – for its Opinion on region-specific analysis, statistics and recommendations in the framework of the European Semester, and the Senaat for its transmission of the Opinion.

The Commission would like to thank the Vlaams Parlement for its close involvement in the European Semester process. The Commission believes that the exchanges organised between the Flemish Government and the Vlaams Parlement on the Flemish Reform Programme, as an important element constitutive of the Belgium National Reform Programme, are an excellent practice and testimony of the strong involvement and ownership of Flanders regarding the European Semester.

As done on a yearly basis, the Commission's European Semester Officers remain fully available to participate in the hearings organised by the Vlaams Parlement, to present the analysis and the identification of challenges in the Country Report, as well as the Commission proposals for country-specific recommendations. The Commission is thankful to the Vlaams Parlement for these opportunities of dialogue as they notably offer the possibility to exchange on the challenges that are specific to Flanders.

As noted in the Opinion, the Commission services are also very regularly exchanging at political and administrative level with Flanders in the context of the European Semester, as for the implementation of Belgium's Recovery and Resilience Plan. The Commission would like to take the opportunity to underline its appreciation of the quality of exchanges and availability of the Flemish authorities. These exchanges are notably enriching the Commission's understanding of region-specific challenges, as well as the policies conducted by Flanders to address them.

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While country-specific recommendations are addressed to Member States, the Commission will continue to make sure that the underlying analysis and progress assessment, wherever relevant, duly considers regional aspects and regional policy initiatives. In this regard, the Commission is thankful for the Vlaams Parlement's appreciation of the fact that the Commission used the input of Flanders to enrich the region-specific analysis in the Country Report (see for instance Annex 15, which displays key socioeconomic and environmental indicators at regional level). The Commission takes good note of the Vlaams Parlement's call to further pursue this effort and it will consider how to make the best use of regional analysis and statistics in future Country Reports, which form the basis for the country-specific recommendations.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Vlaams Parlement and looks forward to continuing the close political dialogue.

Yours faithfully,

*Valdis Dombrovskis
Executive Vice-President*

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*