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Answer given by Ms Ferreira  
on behalf of the European Commission  
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The European Commission's Report on the Impact of Demographic Change<sup>1</sup> addresses the demographic challenges across the EU. There are wide variations in demographic trends in Europe, between and within Member States. While population decline is prevailing in some rural areas, mainly metropolitan regions experience fast population growth. Different regions are affected differently by demographic change. 31 million people, or 7% of the EU population, live in a region facing this twin challenge of rapid population decline and low GDP per head.

The current crisis risks exacerbating existing regional inequalities – both within and among regions. The European Commission launched a comprehensive recovery plan<sup>2</sup>, in which Cohesion Policy plays a crucial role through focusing on the regions hardest hit by the crisis. REACT-EU, the Just Transition Fund and Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 will provide substantial resources for creating jobs and growth in the regions and a flexible framework for Member States and regions to address demographic change in an integrated manner. The policy mix may include strengthening links between rural areas and cities, economic diversification of rural areas, economic reconversion of territories the most exposed to the negative effects of climate transition, decentralised energy production, developing skills and access to services, including digital services, finally provision of essential infrastructures, such as childcare facilities, health care and long-term care. In addition, the Common Agricultural Policy plays and will continue to play an important role in boosting economic, environmental and social development of rural areas. The forthcoming long-term vision for rural areas will also help enabling rural areas to make the most of their potential and help them meet challenges such as demographic change, connectivity, risk of poverty, limited access to services. It will be presented in 2021, following a wide ranging public consultation and taking into account the various aspects highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> COM (2020) 241 of 17 June 2020.

<sup>2</sup> The final programmes, their structure and budgetary envelopes are subject to the outcome of the discussions between the European Parliament and the Council on the elements of the recovery package, in accordance with the respective adoption procedure, in particular the Own Resources Decision, the MFF Regulation, the Interinstitutional Agreement, and sectoral legislation.