

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000721/26
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(20 February 2026)**

Subject: Population redistribution policies

The overconcentration of population and economic activity in urban areas, such as Athens and the neighbouring municipalities in Attica, puts increasing pressure on residents' quality of life. Rising housing and travel costs, congestion, the environmental burden and limited access to public spaces are linked to deteriorating mental health indicators and general social discontent. At the same time, overconcentration of people in urban areas generates 'diseconomies of scale', while large regions of the country face depopulation and underutilisation of infrastructure.

Bearing in mind that the EU's cohesion policy, the relevant funds (ERDF, ESF+) and the Recovery Fund aim to foster territorial cohesion and reduce regional disparities, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Is it monitoring the effects of overconcentration of Member States' populations in capital cities, in particular the impact on mental health, cost of living and the sustainability of urban infrastructure?
2. Are there European tools or guidelines that encourage policies of voluntary relocation, the strengthening of teleworking and the transfer of public services to areas away from urban centres?
3. Does it intend to step up financial and technical support to Member States pursuing spatial balancing strategies with the aim of decongesting urban centres and reviving areas away from urban centres?

Submitted: 20.2.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Fitto on behalf of the European Commission
(27 March 2026)**

The EU Agenda for Cities ⁽¹⁾ reinforces the approach to urban development in areas such as housing, social inclusion and equality, mobility, climate and environment. Cities and other urban areas are supported to address challenges of today.

The agenda emphasises the urban — rural linkages, and the logic is also embedded in policy objective 5 'Europe closer to citizens' of cohesion policy funds 2021-2027 ⁽²⁾.

The European Urban Initiative ⁽³⁾ under cohesion policy supports innovation and builds capacities of cities and provides policy learning, also on the effects of ever-increasing urbanisation.

The quality of life in European cities survey ⁽⁴⁾ analyses perceptions of residents on issues such as mental health, access to green spaces, earning of a living and satisfaction with urban infrastructure.

As to policy action contributing to voluntary relocation and related issues, the communication on harnessing talent in Europe's regions ⁽⁵⁾ stepped up efforts to counter the risk of growing territorial disparities caused by demographic challenges. The talent booster mechanism offers technical assistance to some of the most affected regions.

The multiannual financial framework proposal for 2028-2034 identifies the 'right to stay' as an enabler for sustainable prosperity across all EU regions under the proposal for a regulation establishing European fund for economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture and rural, fisheries and maritime, prosperity and security ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/communications/2025/eu-agenda-for-cities-2025_en.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058>.

⁽³⁾ <https://www.urban-initiative.eu>.

⁽⁴⁾ The survey covers 83 capital cities and other major cities in the EU, the EFTA, the UK, the Western Balkans and Turkey with a total of more than 70 000 interviews: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/reports/2023/quality-of-life-in-european-cities_en.

⁽⁵⁾ Harnessing talent in Europe's regions: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/publications/communications/2023/harnessing-talent-in-europe-s-regions_en.

⁽⁶⁾ COM(2025) 565 final: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025PC0565&qid=1753801752960>.