

**WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2016****of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)**

The following work programme has been prepared in accordance with the work programme of the European Commission for 2016, the CoR resolution on the European Commission's work programme for 2016, and the intensified cooperation with the European Parliament.

This work programme aims to provide guidelines for the work to be carried out in 2016 and thereby help to ensure continuity, coherence and effectiveness in advancing current priorities and reinforcing political impact.

The work programme was approved by the COTER members during the meeting of 11 December 2015, and was adopted by the CoR Bureau on 9 February 2016.

The remit of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget covers the following fields:

1. Economic, social and territorial cohesion
2. Structural Funds
3. Spatial planning
4. Urban policy
5. Housing
6. Transport and trans-European transport networks
7. Macro-regions
8. Territorial cooperation
9. Regional statistics and indicators
10. Annual EU budget*
11. Multiannual financial framework*
12. Local and regional finances*

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Policy remit to be dealt with in the BUDG Working Group (Rule 62, CoR Rules of Procedure).

1. **Priorities of the COTER commission**

1.1 **Priority policy areas¹**

The COTER commission will concentrate its efforts on the following priority policy areas with high relevance for the EU agenda and direct impact on local and regional authorities:

- **Urban Agenda and Urban Impact Assessment**

The COTER commission will continue its work towards an integrated EU Urban Agenda as outlined in its opinion on "Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU"². One key element of COTER's work in this field in 2016 will be the drafting of the opinion on "Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda"³, which has been requested by the upcoming Dutch Presidency of the Council.

To this end, the COTER commission will closely cooperate with the EP REGI committee on the matter, in line with the joint statement on the REGI-COTER cooperation "towards the Pact of Amsterdam", which was agreed on the occasion of the joint REGI-COTER meeting of 13 October 2015. This cooperation will include a joint hearing on the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda in the first quarter of 2016, as well as the close involvement of the EP REGI committee and the EP Urban Intergroup in the CoR High Level Conference on the EU Urban Agenda, which will be held back to back with the informal ministerial meeting on Urban policy on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam.

In addition, the COTER commission will continue to promote the systematic application of Territorial Impact Assessments (TIA) within the EU institutions as part of better and more targeted EU legislation, in line with its opinion on Assessing Territorial Impacts⁴ and the revised CoR TIA strategy⁵. In view of the urban impact of EU policies, the COTER commission will pay particular attention to the issue of Urban Impact Assessments (UIA) as part of the TIA

- **Mid-term review of the Multi-annual financial framework and EU budget**

One of the priorities for the European Commission in 2016 will be the mid-term review of the Multi-annual financial framework (MFF)⁶. In this respect, the possibility of an CoR own initiative opinion could be explored. The BUDG working group⁷ will pay particular attention to the mid-term review of the MFF, and will closely monitor developments concerning a reform of EU own resources and efforts towards an EU Budget focused on results.

¹ An explanatory sheet for each proposed priority policy area is enclosed in Appendix III. These policy areas will also be the first to benefit from the Thematic Planning process.

² COR-2013-06902-00-00-AC, rapporteur Mr Bas Verkerk (NL/ALDE).

³ Rapporteur Ms Hella Dunger-Löper (DE/PES).

⁴ CDR-29-2013-00-00-AC, rapporteur Mr Michael Schneider (DE/EPP).

⁵ To be endorsed at the CoR Bureau meeting on 2 December 2015.

⁶ See Commission Work Programme for 2016 COM(2015) 610 final.

⁷ Based on Rule 62 of the CoR Rules of Procedure, COTER established the working group on budgetary issues (BUDG group) to deal with budgetary remits.

- **Cross-border cooperation (including EGTC and "missing links")**

The COTER commission will continue to underline that Cross-border cooperation has clear European added value. It will follow-up on its recent opinion on "Strengthening cross-border cooperation – the need for a better regulatory framework"⁸ and will closely follow the debate in the Council on the proposal of the Luxembourg Presidency concerning a new tool to facilitate cross-border cooperation.

The COTER commission will monitor the assessment of cross-border cooperation carried out by the European Commission, and eventually prepare an own-initiative opinion on the outcome, if necessary. The COTER Commission intends to highlight the cross-border dimension in TIA, in cooperation with the Interregional Group on Cross-border Cooperation and with the EGTC Platform.

The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) is a key instrument to effectively organise and manage cross-border cooperation. The COTER Commission, through the EGTC Platform, will be promoting the implementation of the Regulation on EGTC and continue to support the further development of the EGTC on the basis of interinstitutional cooperation, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

In addition, the COTER commission will focus on the improvement of cross-border transport and the issue of missing cross-border transport links at local and regional level. In this regard, it will seek close cooperation with the EP TRAN committee on the matter, including the organisation of a joint meeting in 2016, in order to raise awareness of the issue and to possibly initiate further joint actions towards the European Commission in view of the upcoming MFF mid-term review. The cooperation could include the involvement of Europe's border regions and the EGTC network, as well as collaboration with DG MOVE of the European Commission and the EIB in the further development of this field.

- **Simplification**

Simplification is fundamental to deliver results and impact for cohesion policy. Most of the managing authorities still see the new regulations as bureaucratic and complex. The CoR therefore insists on further simplification in the management of EU-funded projects.

The European Commission has set up a High-Level Expert Group on Monitoring Simplification for Beneficiaries of ESI Funds. The CoR welcomes the launch of the High-Level group and will continue to participate in this group, where relevant. The COTER commission intends to engage local and regional experts in the field of Cohesion Policy management in its meetings, in order to exchange experiences, best practices and ideas on simplification. The results of the discussions on simplification will feed into the CoR contribution to the High-level group and its future work in this field. The CoR might look into the possibility to issue an own-initiative opinion.

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COR-2015-4286-00-00-AC, rapporteur Mr Nicola Dobroslavić (HR/EPP).

- **Future of Cohesion Policy**

It is crucial for the CoR to enter into the debate on economic, social and territorial cohesion for the next "Cohesion Policy Cycle" at an early stage, in order to ensure that the needs of local and regional authorities are effectively taken on board. The COTER commission is already carrying out a project fostering a thematic discussion with other EU institutions, experts and key stakeholders. The discussion is supported by a study on the future of Cohesion Policy. A Conference on the Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 will be organised in March 2016, in order to present the result of the study and further contribute to the political debate.

In this regard, the COTER commission will also give particular focus to the debate on "GDP and beyond" and the development of alternative or complementary indicators for well-being and sustainable development⁹.

It is envisaged that the CoR will issue an own-initiative opinion on the Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 in the second half of 2016. A key objective of the opinion is to influence the preparatory documents of the European Commission on the matter, anticipated at the end of the year 2016. The future cohesion policy architecture is expected to be presented by the European Commission in the 7th cohesion report in 2017.

1.2 Other thematic issues

- **Transport**

Transport is a key policy issue for COTER as it has an impact on territorial cohesion and regional economic growth. In the field of transport policy, the COTER commission will closely follow-up on interinstitutional developments in those dossiers the CoR has already issued an opinion on, in particular on urban mobility and multimodal travel planning and integrated ticketing. The expected Aviation and Road packages, the communication on rail freight noise, and the dossiers on port reception facilities and maritime legislation will also be discussed by COTER, as far as it will be relevant to local and regional authorities.

The issue of accessibility of remote regions and islands and its implications on growth and jobs will be addressed at a COTER external seminar on "Barriers to Economic Development and Wealth Creation in a Remote Island Community", which will be held on 9 September 2016 in the Shetland Islands, United Kingdom.

- **European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI)**

The EFSI is now operational. Strong synergies between the new EFSI and the operational programmes of the ESI Funds will be of crucial importance in order to ensure coherence between investment projects and development strategies in Europe's regions. The COTER commission will therefore endeavour to ensure that the needs of cities and regions are appropriately considered in the

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CoR own-initiative opinion on Indicators for territorial development – GDP and beyond (rapporteur Ms Catuscia Marini (IT/PES)), to be adopted at the CoR plenary session of 10-11 February 2016.

interinstitutional debate on the matter and call for proper coordination between the EFSI and the ESIF programmes.

- **Macro-regional strategies**

The macro-regional approach helps to overcome traditional frontiers and administrative patterns. Following the previous work of the CoR on the existing EU macro-regional strategies, the COTER commission will continue its work on macro-regions and closely follow the European Commission's work on developing the new management structures for macro-regions.

2. **Follow-up of opinions**

The opinions of the European Committee of the Regions are the main political tools to convey the political viewpoint of CoR members to the other institutions of the European Union. In this new term of office, the CoR will continue to give focus to the follow-up of opinions, in order to ensure that the messages of the CoR can achieve the greatest political impact in the EU decision-making process.

The COTER commission will closely follow-up, and seek to influence, the interinstitutional developments on the following key dossiers which concern CoR adopted opinions:

- Outcome of the negotiations on the partnership agreements and operational programmes (COR-2014-6248)
- The improvement of the implementation of the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (COR-2015-487)
- Towards an integrated urban agenda for the EU (COR 2013-6902)
- Urban mobility package (COR-2014-90)
- Implementation of the 2011 White Paper on Transport (COR-2015-1426)
- Multimodal travel information, planning and ticketing systems (COR-2014-4895)
- Mobility in geographically and demographically challenged regions (COR-2014-1691)
- An Alpine macro-regional strategy for the European Union (COR-2014-2994)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) (COR-2014-23)
- An Investment Plan for Europe (COR-2015-943)
- Financial instruments in support of territorial development (COR-2015-1722).

3. **Interinstitutional cooperation**

The COTER commission will continue to develop its cooperation with the European Parliament's REGI and TRAN Committees, as well as with the Urban Intergroup in the Parliament. In addition, the BUDG working group will seek to further develop its good relations with the EP's BUDG and CONT Committees, in cooperation with CFAA. Cooperation with the EP will include the reciprocal participation of rapporteurs in COTER and EP committee meetings and hearings, bilateral consultations with the leading rapporteurs, rapporteurs on opinions and shadow rapporteurs, and other joint activities, such as joint hearings, round table discussions, etc., where appropriate. As in recent years, the COTER commission will also aim to organise an annual joint meeting between COTER and REGI members, which has proven to be an excellent occasion for a fruitful exchange of views

between members and for reinforcing the excellent cooperation between the two bodies. The joint COTER-REGI meeting offers an excellent opportunity for members to develop common initiatives and support their work on strategically important priorities. Following this model, the COTER commission will strive to organise a similar joint meeting with the EP TRAN committee in 2016, which could look into the issue of cross-border mobility and missing links.

The COTER commission will maintain and further develop the close relations it has established with the European Commission's Directorates-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE). The BUDG working group will build on already established good relations with the Directorate-General for Financial Programming and Budgets (DG BUDG).

The COTER commission will seek to be involved in future working groups to be established by DG REGIO, where relevant.

The COTER commission will continue to support the involvement of the CoR in the Presidencies' activities, including the informal Council meetings and relevant preparatory meetings on subjects falling within its remit, in particular via the intergovernmental Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP), the Urban Development Group (UDG), and the related Directors-General meetings. The COTER commission's external meeting and the High Level Conference on the EU Urban Agenda on 30-31 May 2016 in Amsterdam will be organised in close cooperation with the upcoming Dutch Council Presidency.

The COTER commission within the remits of its responsibilities aims to maintain excellent cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) in areas of common concern. Previous contacts with the European Court of Auditors could also be further exploited in 2016. COTER also intends to continue cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee, where appropriate.

4. Cooperation with other organisations and bodies

The COTER commission will continue to work closely with relevant European and national associations of regional and local governments (especially in the process of adopting opinions) and will encourage the exchange of information in areas of common interest. It will continue to promote its good relations and contacts with EuroCities, CEMR, CPMR, AER, AEBR, CALRE, and others.

In line with the memorandum of understanding between the CoR and the OECD¹⁰, the COTER commission will strengthen its cooperation with the OECD, in particular in the area of regional and urban development and regional indicators. To this end, COTER will, in particular, invite the OECD to present its studies on policy matters relevant to COTER remits in upcoming COTER commission meetings.

The CoR is a permanent institutional member of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC), representing the position of local and regional authorities. ESAC was established in 2008 by the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that user requirements are taken into account in determining the strategic objectives of statistics in the European Union. The COTER commission will

¹⁰ COR-2014-05891-13-01-NB-TRA.

continue to promote the CoR's objective of feeding the territorial perspective into ESAC debates, papers and opinions and to promote the user needs of regions and cities. With a view to enriching and further targeting its consultative work, the COTER commission will continue to cooperate with other international centres of expertise, such as ESPON¹¹, EUKN¹² and the EPRC¹³.

5. Complementary activities

The COTER commission will hold two external events in 2016: The first one will be the COTER meeting and High Level Conference on the Urban Agenda that will take place on 30-31 May 2016 in Amsterdam. The second one will be a COTER external seminar on "Barriers to Economic Development and Wealth Creation in a Remote Island Community", which will take place on 9 September 2016 in the Shetland Islands, United Kingdom.

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11 European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion.

12 European Urban Knowledge Network.

13 European Policies Research Centre.