



Commission for citizenship, governance, institutional and external affairs (CIVEX)

Conference The future of the EU and the role of the regions

Background note

10 April 2018, 11:00-18:00

European Committee of the Regions
Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99-101, Brussels

11:00 - 11:30

Welcome addresses

(Room JDE 52)

- **Barbara Duden**, Member of Hamburg City Parliament and Chair of the CoR Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)
- **Prof Dr Gabriele Abels**, Director of Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence PRRIDE, University of Tübingen, Germany

11:30 – 13:00 Panel debate: Regions and the future of the EU

Moderator: Stefan Gänzle

Panelists

- **Prof Dr Danuta Hübner**, Member of the European Parliament, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO)
- **Barbara Duden**, Member of Hamburg City Parliament and Chair of the CoR Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX)
- **Iona Raugze**, Director of the ESPON EGTC, Luxembourg
- **Prof Dr Gabriele Abels**, Jean Mnet Centre of Excellence PRRIDE, University of Tuebingen, Germany

A wide debate on the future of Europe is taking place, at a time of multiple challenges for the European integration. In the early 1990s a discussion over the role of the regions in the European Union led to demands for a “Europe of the regions” and to a number of reforms; yet, simplistic visions of a “Europe of the regions” were not realized in the past. At the same time, we see striking calls for greater autonomy or even independence by several regions in Europe, an intensified regional lobbying, transnational regional cooperation and macro-regional strategies. These developments illustrate the need to discuss what role the regions could and should play in the future EU27. More differentiated ideas and concepts about a “Europe with the regions” gained prominence

and are worth inspecting. The question remains how regions can feed into the ongoing debate about the future of the EU. On the table are some policy proposals, which are, however, “region-blind” – even if their follow up might affect significantly the future role of regions in the EU framework.

Following the decision of the UK to leave the EU and in the framework of the wide debate opened by Heads of State and Government in Bratislava in late 2016, the European Commission published its White Paper on the Future of Europe: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025 on 1 March 2017. The White Paper outlines five different scenarios and discusses their implications and associated risks. By and large, the White Paper remains silent about the role of the regions in the future EU governance architecture.

This finding also pertains to Commission President Juncker’s “State of the Union” speech delivered in September 2017, where he advocated a so-called "sixth scenario" with a more unified Europe, financially and internationally stronger and more politically accountable. At the same time the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing less more efficiently", which was set up in November 2017, recalls a possibly different perspective. Finally, when the French President Macron called for a new founding momentum, the role of regions was not addressed and follow-up comments and proposals by other key European policy-makers were, by and large, equally ‘region-blind’. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) was, however, asked by the President of the European Council for an opinion on the “Future of Europe” in order to give a voice to regional and local authorities. This opinion is planned for adoption in the CoR plenary on 8-10 October 2018.

The introductory panel debate will raise general questions about the role of regions in the future EU such as:

- 1) What is the position of the CoR in the “Reflecting on Europe” debate?
- 2) What can “a Europe with the regions” mean given the challenges the EU is facing?
- 3) What do existing indicators for territorial development tell us about the prospects of regions (and cities)? What challenges are regions (and cities) facing? What could and should be an adequate political response?
- 4) Which different role do you see for regions and cities in a reformed institutional setting of the EU?
- 5) Do macro-regional strategies have a more integrative or disintegrative effect?
- 6) How can regions and local authorities help to rebuild trust in the EU?

14:30 - 15:45 Parallel workshops I**1) Multi-speed Europe and its potential effects on regions (JDE 52, webstreamed)**

Moderator: David Simmonds

Speakers

- **Mercedes Bresso, Member of the European Parliament**
- **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, Head of the Region of Central Macedonia, Greece, and CoR member
- **Prof Dr Simona Piattoni**, University of Trento

The White Paper on the Future of the EU introduces the option of “Those who want more do more” (scenario 3). This option of “multi-speed Europe” is strongly contested, even though the Lisbon Treaty codifies flexible integration and even though this method has already been used in several policy sectors (such as the Eurozone) for a number of years. While Commission President Juncker opposes this scenario, the French President Macron emphasized this option in his Sorbonne speech. Other member states are divided on this issue. So far, the territorial impact of "multi-speed Europe" does not seem to have been investigated.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) How can European integration proceed while respecting the diversity of peoples and perspectives in the Union?
- 2) Can and should more flexible integration be a method in favour of more integration? Or does it foster disintegration?
- 3) Which policy sectors are likely candidates for flexible integration? Does it make sense to include policies with a territorial impact?
- 4) What could be the potential impacts of multi-speed models on regions and their position in a more flexible and, potentially, more complicated governance structure of the EU?

2) Enhancing the subsidiarity mechanism (JDE51, webstreamed)

Moderator: Gabriele Abels

Speakers

- **Michael Schneider**, State Secretary, Representative of the Land of Saxony-Anhalt to the German Federal Government and CoR member
- **Prof Dr Christian Callies**, European Commission, Team Leader, European Political Strategy Centre

The subsidiarity principle is at the heart of the European architecture and at the same time it is academically as well as politically discussed. While some see it as an important and dynamic principle for competence-sharing among different levels of governance and different actors, others are more sceptical about its effectiveness. Subsidiarity gained in prominence in the framework of the debate on the future of Europe and the set-up by the European Commission of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing less more efficiently", that explicitly recalls the 4th scenario of the White Paper.

The CoR has been actively involved in developing and enhancing the subsidiarity principles as well as the mechanisms to realize it, focussing on support to regional actors. Especially the role of regions (and, above all, regional parliaments) in the subsidiarity mechanism needs to be fully understood, as well as their call for more direct involvement and their keen interest in political dialogue with the

European Commission. Indeed, as a large part of the EU's legislation and budget are implemented at local and regional level, a better application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality can lead to the development and implementation of legislation that is more effective on the ground. In this regard, the strong involvement of local and regional authorities in all stages of the legislative process, and a dynamic implementation of subsidiarity and proportionality in a multi-level governance approach, are key to the future of the European project. The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are also political and should not be distorted to serve Eurosceptic goals.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) In which direction should the principle of subsidiarity be developed in the future?
- 2) What role will the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing less more efficiently" could play in shaping the subsidiarity principle?
- 3) What are the key problems of the current subsidiarity mechanism for regional actors?
- 4) How can the already existing supportive structures be further enhanced?
- 5) How can regions be meaningful actors in the subsidiarity mechanism? Are there best practices?
- 6) Does the discussion on the scenarios of the White Paper open a new perspective for the subsidiarity principle, both enhancing the role of the regions in EU affairs and with the possible re-nationalization of some policy areas?

3) The role of macro-regions in European governance (VMA1)

Moderator: Doreen Huddart

Speakers

- **Olgierd Geblewicz**, President of Westpomerania Region and CoR member
- **Prof Dr Stefan Gänzle**, University of Agder, Norway

Macro-regions are a fairly new invention in the toolbox of regional integration. Starting in 2009 with the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the EU, in close cooperation with Member States and regions and mainly with the support of ESI Funds, has introduced several macro-regional strategies. From an academic perspective macro-regions are discussed as specific governance structures, while for the EU they are "policy frameworks" that should not imply new legislation, new institutions or new funds (the "three no's rule"). In any case, they involve the change from regions as territories to regions as more functional spaces. From a practical perspective, a number of problems exist on the ground.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) What makes macro-regions successful? Can macro-regions implementation be considered homogeneous so far?
- 2) What are key problems associated with macro-regions?
- 3) What is the effect of the "Three Nos" on the working of macro-regions?
- 4) Which policy sectors are particularly useful for macro-regions?
- 5) Can macro-regional strategies help to strengthening European integration from the bottom?
- 6) What can their role be in a "Europe with the regions"?

16:15 - 17:30 Parallel workshops II**4) Regions and changes in economic governance (VMA1)**

Moderator: Michael Murphy

Speakers

- **Christophe Rouillon**, Mayor of Coullaines, France, and CoR member
- **Dr Dieter Plewe**, Berlin Social Science Centre (WZB), Germany

With the onset of what is usually called the economic or debt crisis in the EU, the structures of economic governance underwent dramatic changes. The Eurozone is clearly at the heart of these changes and much of the debate on the future of the EU focuses on reforms of the Eurozone. Different proposals and preferences are on the table, following the European Commission Reflection Papers on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union and on the Future of EU Finances. The CoR has intensively discussed the potential impact of changing economic governance arrangements on regions and in May 2017 the CoR Plenary has unanimously proposed the adoption of a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities in the European Semester. Moreover, from a regional perspective, the proposed use of financial incentives and conditionality to promote structural reforms might be controversial.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) What is the potential impact of new economic governance on regions?
- 2) How do regions respond to the challenges?
- 3) How to strengthen the role of regions in EU economic governance?
- 4) How to promote a mixed top-down and bottom-up approach in the European economic governance, namely in the European Semester process, thus seeing the local and regional authorities as partners, and not as mere implementers?

5) Democratic requirements for European regional governance (JDE51, webstreamed)

Moderator: Gabriele Abels

Speakers

- **Mairi Angela Gudgeon**, Member of the Scottish Parliament and CoR member
- **Prof Dr Ulrike Guérot**, Danube University Krems, Austria

Regions (and cities) see themselves as being closer to the citizens and they are seen as important actors to rebuild trust in the EU. Therefore, they call for a stronger role in European governance. Currently, the role of cities in the EU institutional framework is being examined by the European Parliament's AFCCO Committee. From an academic point of view, normative as well as practical pros and cons are discussed for and against a stronger role of regions and cities. While some democratic requirements may be improved (more input legitimacy), increasing complexity and less transparency may be a drawback (less throughput legitimacy). Also, stronger democratization does not automatically go hand in hand with stronger parliamentarization of governance. Yet, in representative democracy parliaments should play a key role.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) What could and should the role of regions be in a future EU?

- 2) How can regional involvement contribute to democratic governance structures at national and at European level?
- 3) What is the contribution of different regional actors?
- 4) What is the relation between the role of regions and the role of cities?
- 5) What is the role of regionalist parties? How relevant are they in the 2019 European Parliament election?
- 6) How can CoR help to make the voice of cities and regions heard in the European public space in a more effective way?

6) Social Europe and the challenges for cohesion policy (JDE52, webstreamed)

Moderator: Ilona Raugze

Speakers

- **Simonetta Saliera**, President of the Emilia-Romagna Regional Assembly and CoR member
- **Claire Dhéret**, EPC Brussels, Head of Social Europe & Well-being programme

A “European pillar of social rights” has been introduced into the debate about the future of Europe. This pillar entails a number of issues with a local dimension such as equal opportunities and inclusion. At the same time, the preparation of the EU budget for the period 2021-2027 has begun in which the future of EU cohesion policy, including the European Social Fund and other programmes related to inclusion and human resources play a crucial role.

Questions to be addressed during this workshop could be:

- 1) What is the view of regions on the European pillar of social rights?
- 2) Is the EU cohesion policy linked to the ‘social Europe’ agenda and how?
- 3) Can a ‘social Europe’ be an effective means to counter scepticism towards European integration?
- 4) What are the pros and cons of a European Social Fund as part of EU cohesion policy post-2020?