

Working methods and 2023-2024 short-term working programme for the "Automotive Regions Alliance"

At their first political meeting in Leipzig on 17 November 2022, the members of the "Automotive Regions Alliance" (ARA) will adopt the following working programme, with which they intend to press ahead with the implementation of the "10 point declaration" agreed at the CoR's 150th plenary session on 30 June 2022, in order to achieve the goal of a fair transition for the automotive regions in transition:

1. Governance and working methods of the Automotive Regions Alliance

1.1 Governance

One region takes over the rotating "chair" of the ARA on an annual basis, supported by a maximum of three co-chairing regions who are also responsible for one of the thematic work packages (see part 2.1). The next chair-region and co-chair regions will be decided at each "Automotive Regions Alliance Annual Conference" (see 1.2), based on discussions in the "Sherpa Group" (see below) ahead of the conference.

The chair, as host, shall prepare the annual meeting under its presidency together with the CoR COTER Secretariat and in close coordination with the Sherpa Group and the CoR Automotive Intergroup (CoRAI), respectively the CoRAI Focus Group (sometimes overlapping with the Sherpa Group). The chair is the political representation of the ARA.

A *Sherpa Group*, consisting of representatives of the Brussels offices of the ARA regions and the CoR COTER Secretariat and the CoRAI Secretariat, will meet regularly (at least three times per year) in Brussels and/or via video conference. The task of the Sherpa Group is to bring forward the ARA activities and up-date the short term-working programme and prepare future working programmes.

A *Technical Secretariat* of the Alliance will be led by the CoR and assisted by the Sherpa Group. The technical secretariat will maintain the website of the ARA and be the first point of contact for regions and other stakeholders. It will consult the Sherpa Group on any substantial questions on topics relevant to the ARA.

1.2 Automotive Regions Alliance Annual Conference

The ARA will meet once a year for the "Automotive Regions Alliance Annual Conference" organised by the chair. The chair will change at this annual conference (see 1.1).

The chair as host will prepare the annual meeting under his presidency together with the technical secretariat and in close coordination with the CoR Automotive Intergroup (CoRAI). The Sherpa Group, in close cooperation with the CoRAI Focus Group (sometimes overlapping) will be the working level.

With regard to sharing the possible costs for the annual meeting between the CoR and the host region, in due time a proposal will be provided to the competent CoR Commission and the Bureau for final decision.

1.3 Meetings for further discussion and networking

Once a year, there should be a political debate of the Alliance as part of a CoR meeting in Brussels. The aim of the debate is to bring the regional perspective on the transformation of the automotive sector to the EU institutions. Representatives of the other EU institutions are to be invited to debates.

Further (virtual) meetings can take place under the same chair, co-chair(s) or the chair of CoRAI. Meetings of the Sherpa Group should serve to deepen the topics and network the actors. One of the regular meetings of the CoR's Automotive Intergroup (CoRAI) should be used for this purpose. The Alliance members who are not (yet) represented in CoRAI should be invited to attend as guests. If possible, such joint meetings with the CoRAI should be organised virtually.

The technical secretariat is asked to set up and maintain the Alliance's website for this purpose and to check the possibility for virtual or at least hybrid meetings.

1.4 Political actions by the Alliance Members

Members of the Automotive Regions Alliance ARA inform CoR-members holding a political mandate in their own territories about ARA activities and encourage them to join the CoR Automotive Intergroup. The CoR Automotive Intergroup (CoRAI) itself is a member of the Alliance.

The Alliance acts collectively at its annual working meetings and addresses its demands and proposals to the EU institutions. Alliance members advocate themselves the policy objectives associated with just, fair and successful change in the automotive industry at all times, but also and actively engage with their national Member States of the EU and the CoR. They raise awareness among national delegations in the CoR, MEPs in their region and their national and regional governments.

The ARA and its members raise the Alliance's issues with the European Commission and the relevant Commissioners and Directorates-General continuously. In addition, the Alliance should be involved as a stakeholder in ongoing dialogue formats of the European Commission on transformation processes (e.g. the transition pathway).

The chair of the ARA, in cooperation with the Sherpa Group, coordinates member regions and supports political actions in order to maintain dialogue and communicate the common position of the Alliance to the European Institutions and helps to raise awareness among national delegations in the CoR, MEPs in their region and their national and regional governments

2. Short term-working programme

The Automotive Regions Alliance aims to ensure that the sustainable transformation of road transport and the automotive sector in the EU leaves no region behind. It will contribute to the discussion to establish a European mechanism supporting a just, fair and successful transition for Europe's automotive and supply industry regions.

The Alliance sees promising links in the European Parliament's report on the 8th Cohesion Report: in the establishment of a new Just Transition Fund II (JTF II) with an extended scope, regions in transition should be eligible.

2.1 ARA thematic work packages 2023-2024

Based on the annual Commission work programme and the requirements of new mobility in order to achieve the EU's climate targets and the related changes in the vehicle fleet and the car industry, the Alliance would like to focus on the following topics in 2023-2024. If new developments in the sector and on the topic make an adaptation necessary, this should be discussed by the Sherpa working group and presented to the chair. The thematic work package shall be revised on a bi-annual basis.

2.1.1 Evaluation of the regional impact of the transformation of the automotive industry and supply industry

Evaluate the regional impact of change and transformation processes in the automotive industry to create a sound and meaningful database. This should be the starting point for the just transition framework, including granular mapping of the impact on regional growth and jobs, sharing the research already made in single regions¹.

¹ A CoR commissioned study in 2023 could be the starting point.

Not only mobility concepts and means of transport must become more sustainable, but also production processes. The goal of "zero emissions" therefore also refers to the production and the entire life cycle of a vehicle. This requires investments to maintain and, if possible, improve the competitiveness of European OEM's and the supply industry. The role of the logistics in the supply chain related to the industrial transformation connected with the new technological solutions is also of key importance.

2.1.2 Skills and Workforce (OEM and suppliers)

Support reskilling and upskilling the regional workforce to avoid job losses in our regions and support the transition towards new jobs in close cooperation with the Pact for Skills (the "Automotive Skills Alliance"). Education and training play an important role for successful regional management of change as the world of work in the automotive industry is changing continuously and sustainably.

2.1.3 Infrastructure deployment and Research and Development

The change to climate-neutral mobility requires not only new propulsion systems and new cars, but also the deployment of alternative fuels recharging infrastructure. Developing a strong research framework for industrial transformation and innovation in the European automotive industry (connected and self-driving vehicles, alternative fuels, etc.), also increasing the resilience of the supply chain for strategic and critical raw materials.

New cars for a new era of mobility need research and development for technical innovations. Topics include in particular lightweight construction, efficiency, new forms of propulsion and fuels, circular economy and new ecological product design.

One objective in this area must be to activate a dialogue with a different level of local public authorities to manage the transitions, to avoid policies that could have a strong impact on the automotive sector.
