Achievements in 2021

Summary of the Annual Impact Report of the European Committee of the Regions
This document provides a summary of the Annual Impact Report of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) on its work and main achievements in 2021. The CoR is a consultative body for the EU institutions. It is composed of 329 members who are elected politicians in the regions, cities, villages and municipalities of the 27 Member States of the EU and who express the views and raise the profile of the more than one million locally elected politicians governing them. The CoR’s impact on the EU decision-making process can be assessed on the basis of its influence on

- preparatory and final legal texts adopted by the EU institutions;
- the profile of local and regional aspects in agenda-setting at EU level;
- changes in the EU’s working methods;
- EU legislation enhancing the daily lives of Europeans; and
- EU action promoted or initiated by the CoR.

The EU Treaties stipulate that the CoR advise the EU institutions on affairs that matter to regions and cities. In general, the CoR does so through opinions, which refer to legislative proposals made by the European Commission (referrals), and own-initiative opinions, which call on the EU institutions to take action. Moreover, CoR positions can be highlighted in resolutions. In 2021, the CoR adopted 69 such documents; the table below shows figures by category and how these figures have evolved since 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>referrals</th>
<th>opinions based on EU documents</th>
<th>own initiative opinions (initiated by the CoR)</th>
<th>resolutions</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to its opinions, the CoR develops joint activities with EU institutions, local and regional councils, parliaments, governments and associations representing local and regional interests, to bring EU affairs closer to regions and cities. In so doing, the CoR publishes studies and reports on particular issues, coordinates networks, holds more than 200 conferences and events every year and communicates its work through relevant channels and tools.

For the 2020-2025 period, the CoR has adopted three political priorities, which guide and structure its political work:

1) Bringing Europe closer to the people;
2) Building resilient local and regional communities;
3) Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the EU.

The remainder of this brochure presents the CoR’s eleven key achievements under these priorities and explains in detail why they are important, what they mean concretely and how they will be followed up.
Bringing Europe closer to the people

Significantly extending the participation of local and regional politicians in the Conference on the Future of Europe from initially 4 to now 30 representatives

The Plenary of the Conference on the Future of Europe is composed of 449 delegates, including 18 representatives of the CoR and 12 locally and regionally elected politicians, the latter having been proposed by the CoR. In the initial drafts of the rules of procedure, only four CoR members had been proposed, while the now 30 regional and local representatives are able to have a greater impact on the outcome of the Conference.

Why is it important?

Positions of the CoR and regions and cities on the topics of the Conference will be better represented. For example, in all nine thematic working groups of the Conference Plenary, there are now at least three local representatives giving voice to, and raising the profile of, local concerns.

What does it mean concretely?

The final report of the Conference is scheduled for adoption in Spring 2022. The EU institutions are committed to following up its findings and recommendations, for example through new political and legal initiatives or even a revision of the EU Treaties.

How will it be followed up?

Read more:
Future of Europe campaign

CoR events (held and planned) in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type of event</th>
<th>number of events</th>
<th>target groups</th>
<th>main purpose</th>
<th>outreach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level events of the CoR</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CoR members, representatives of EU institutions, stakeholders</td>
<td>presenting and debating CoR positions</td>
<td>4000 (including the Summit in Marseille)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoR-Bertelsmann Stiftung project and local events organised by CoR members</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>citizens, local/ regional politicians</td>
<td>input into the CoR works and the Conference</td>
<td>3800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Regions’ Week</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>stakeholders, politicians, citizens</td>
<td>debates in the wider context the Conference</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young elected politicians programme</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Young politicians</td>
<td>input into the CoR debates and the Conference</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, President of the CoR
Increasing outreach to the one million elected regional and local politicians by successfully launching the “CoR Regional and Local EU Councillors Initiative”.

“Europe” happens daily in our regions, cities and villages

Apostolos Tzitzikostas, Governor of Central Macedonia, Greece, and President of the CoR

Why is it important?

In the EU there are more than one million politicians who are elected representatives in governments, parliaments or assemblies of regions, cities, towns, provinces, municipalities and villages. They deal with European laws, funding programmes and debates on a daily basis, which is why it is important to involve them more actively in EU policy-making and the future of Europe.

What does it mean concretely?

On the occasion of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the CoR launched the “European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors” in May 2021. By the end of 2021, more than 1000 local politicians from all 27 Member States had registered on the Network. They receive targeted information through newsletters and briefings, invitations to events and links to political debates at the CoR and can exchange information and comments with CoR members and other Network members.

How will it be followed up?

As of 2022, the European Commission will roll out an initiative of the European Parliament entitled “Building European with Local Entities” (BELE), which will offer possibilities for bringing European affairs closer to the local level. The CoR’s EU Councillors’ Network will be invited to play an active role in the BELE initiative.

Publication of the second edition of the Barometer Report on the state of EU regions and cities, with unprecedented outreach

Why is it important?

Since 2020, the CoR has been presenting reports on the state of the regions and cities of the EU: the “Barometer” report. The 2021 edition brought together evidence and findings from more than 100 studies and reports on the economic, social and financial situation of the 240 regions, 600 cities and almost 90,000 municipalities in the EU.

What does it mean concretely?

The second edition of the “Barometer” report was seen as a valuable source of information for CoR members and regional and local politicians. Moreover, it provided the first-ever survey representative of the more than one million politicians elected at sub-national levels, had a significant impact in the media and helped persuade the EU institutions to take the territorial dimension into account in their policy initiatives.

How will it be followed up?

In 2022, the third edition of the “Barometer” report will most likely be presented on 11 October during the 20th European Week of Regions and Cities. Among other things, the report will reflect on the findings of the European Commission’s 8th Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion and the roll-out of EU funding programmes for the 2021-2027 period.

Read more:
European Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors

Read more:
EU regional and local Barometer report 2021
On 6 October 2021, the Regulation on the “Brexit Adjustment Reserve” entered into force, providing the legal foundation for the roll-out of a EUR 5.4 billion programme to help regions deal with the economic and social consequences of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. The Regulation took into account a number of suggestions made by the CoR.

Why is it important?

Regions, and specifically coastal communities, are now more closely involved in deployment of the instrument than was originally proposed by the European Commission. Other CoR suggestions concerned the allocation criteria for the funding and delivery of the Reserve. A constant exchange between the CoR rapporteur and Members of the European Parliament facilitated changes to the initial proposal of the Regulation.

What does it mean concretely?

Regions will be able to draw from the Reserve, with the possibility of using it as a funding instrument in certain cases. The Commission will monitor implementation of the Reserve.

How will it be followed up?

Following the definition of eligible areas and projects in early 2022, deployment of the Reserve will cover the 2021-2023 period. The CoR will monitor the deployment, possibly through own reports or opinions.

Read more:
Relationship with the UK
Building resilient local and regional communities

First information from our monitoring of Members’ on Green Deal commitments

Why is it important?

The EU’s “Horizon Europe” is framed by five missions that address important policy challenges across different levels of government in the EU. They set objectives to be achieved by 2030, such as “making 150 regions and communities climate-resilient”, establishing “100 climate-neutral and smart cities” and “creating 100 living labs to lead the transition towards healthy soil”.

What does it mean concretely?

The CoR rapporteur on the “Horizon” missions established contacts with various Directorates-General of the European Commission and the Mission Boards in order to ensure that the views and possibilities of regions and cities and the role of the CoR in particular are taken into account in the roll-out of the Missions.

How will it be followed up?

The CoR will follow up on the Mission’s activities, for example, with regard to the development of regional innovation eco-systems and smart specialisation strategies and pilot projects such as “European Research Area (ERA) Hubs” and the “green transition in the smart specialisation concept (S4)” - to be launched at the beginning of 2022.

Read more: Cooperation with the European Commission in the fields of research and innovation, education and culture
ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021
SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

7 Establishing a number of strategic co-operations in implementing the Green Deal such as the Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform, the launch of Green Deal Going Local campaign and others

Why is it important?
The “European Green Deal” is a key policy initiative, the delivery of which is shared by all EU institutions and bodies. As part of the activities of the CoR’s “Green Deal Going Local Working Group”, the CoR agreed to enhanced cooperation with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Environment in 2021, which includes the establishment of a “Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform”. This is another example of our work on the Green Deal.

What does it mean concretely?
Launched on 16 December 2021 through a joint event held by the CoR and the European Commission, the Platform will bring together players from different communities and areas of expertise to tackle inter-related challenges, such as strengthening the joint environment and health agenda.

How will it be followed up?
The Platform’s activities will be based on a work programme for 2022-2024, which will be developed as of early 2022 and delivered through flagship projects, including ones implemented by regions and cities. Other measures involving the CoR concern the establishment of a scoreboard for EU regions’ green performance, which will be the basis for the future “Green Region of the Year” award.

Read more:
Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform

8 Ensuring a EUR 300 million investment by the “Digital Europe” programme for the financing of European Digital Innovation Hubs in each EU region and playing an active role in the New European Bauhaus Initiative at a very early stage in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre and the European Parliament

Why is it important?
In 2021, several CoR opinions and publications highlighted regional aspects of one of the key priorities on the EU agenda, “Europe fit for the digital age”. The impact of CoR opinions on legislative proposals, such as the Digital Services and Digital Markets Acts and the “2030 Digital Compass”, has been significant and is supported by the CoR’s Broadband Platform, which was relaunched jointly with the European Commission in January 2021.

What does it mean concretely?
In 2021, the European Commission suggested the implementation of “European Digital Innovation Hubs” as part of the EU’s “Digital Europe” programme. The Hubs will have both local and European functions and EU funding will be made available for national, regional and local hubs to cover activities with clear European added value, based on networking the hubs and promoting the transfer of expertise.

How will it be followed up?
In 2022, the CoR’s Broadband Platform will continue to monitor implementation of key EU initiatives on digital, including the “European Digital Innovation Hubs” initiative. Moreover, activities will be undertaken to boost members’ expertise on the digital transformation in order to facilitate their participation in policy discourse at local and EU level, firmly rooting the concept of digital cohesion in implementation of the “2030 Digital Compass” initiative and its promotion as an additional dimension of the concept of economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Read more:
Cities, villages and regions strengthen cooperation with the European Commission to bridge the digital divide in Europe
Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the EU

In July 2021, the Regulations governing EU cohesion policy between 2021 and 2027 entered into force. During that period, almost EUR 380 billion will be available under different funds to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges that EU regions and cities are facing.

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Article 8 of the Common Provisions Regulation covering EU cohesion policy funds refers to “partnership and multilevel governance”, a principle that will entail the involvement of regions throughout the programming, implementation and evaluation of 400+ national and regional programmes that will be in place for the delivery of EU cohesion policy in the years to come. The CoR, together with the European Parliament, has lobbied for maintaining a strong position for the principle in the Regulation.

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How will it be followed up?

Implementation of EU cohesion policy programmes in 2021-2027 and application of the partnership principle will most likely be a matter for debate within the CoR, as well as with the partners of the “Cohesion Alliance” in 2022 and beyond.

Read more:
Cohesion, Our Fundamental Value campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EUR bn</th>
<th>for EU cohesion policy funds between 2021 and 2027</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>concentrated on less developed or transition regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>380</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
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Since 2016, the CoR has advocated a “rural agenda of the EU”. Adoption of the “long-term EU vision for rural areas” in June 2021 by the European Commission finally resulted in considerable involvement of the CoR in its governance mechanism, in particular as regards “Rural Pacts”.

Why is it important?
In February 2021, the Regulation establishing the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Facility entered into force, providing the legal basis for distributing funds and loans of up to EUR 672.5 billion (in 2018 prices) to the Member States between 2021 and 2026. Based on Articles 174 and 175 of the Treaty on European Union, delivery of the Facility also aims to support economic, social and territorial cohesion and to address disparities between the regions of the EU.

What does it mean concretely?
The Facility’s delivery will be framed by six policy pillars and National Recovery and Resilience Plans will facilitate implementation. The latter will be monitored through a scoreboard, which is built on 14 common indicators laid down in a Commission Regulation of December 2021.

How will it be followed up?
Based on the results from the Scoreboard, there will be two reports per year on progress made with the Facility, also taking territorial aspects into account. The CoR may decide to share its views on the Facility’s implementation with the EU institutions and issue opinions on the subject matter.

Read more:
the CoR’s Commission for Economic Policy
The regions, cities and villages of the European Union

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Provinces, counties and districts</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Member States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>240</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>90000</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regional and local administrations account for:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ of public investment
- $\frac{1}{3}$ of public expenditure
- $\frac{1}{4}$ of tax revenues

Facts & figures

- 1350 provinces, counties and districts
- 600 cities
- 90000 municipalities
- 27 Member States

44% of the EU population live in predominantly urban regions
36% in intermediate regions
20% in rural regions
35.5% citizens live in cross-border regions

450 million EU citizens
Created in 1994, after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU’s assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 447 million Europeans.

Its main objectives are to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU’s decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council have to consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union as a means of upholding EU law where there are breaches to the subsidiarity principle or failures to respect regional or local authorities.