EUROPEAN UNION

Committee of the Regions

Monitoring EU policies through CoR platforms, networks and expert groups – future opportunities

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It does not represent the official views of the Committee of the Regions.

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Contents

List of acronyms

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
AGS	Annual Growth Survey
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
ASBL	*Assemblée sans but lucratif* (non-profit association in Belgian law)
AT	Austria
CALRE	Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies
CoR	Committee of the Regions
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DE	Germany
DG	Directorate General
DG SANCO	DG for Health and Consumers
DTC	Directorate for Consultative Works
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists Group
EE	Estonia
EER	European Entrepreneurial Regions
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EIB	European Investment Bank
EPP	European People's Party
ES	Spain
ESPON	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion
ETP	European Technology Platform
EU	European Union
EUKN	European Urban Knowledge Network
EUREGHA	European Regional and Local Health Authorities
FIs	Flagship Initiatives
FR	France
IPEX	Inter-parliamentary EU Information Exchange Platform
IT	Italy
LMN	Lisbon Monitoring Platform
LRA	Local and Regional Authority
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NL	The Netherlands
NRP	National Reform Programme
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Party of European Socialists

PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PL	Poland
REGPEX	Regional Parliamentary Exchange
SMN	Subsidiarity Monitoring Network
TC	Technical Cooperation
TEU	Treaty on the European Union
TIA	Territorial Impact Assessment
TSW	Thematic Subsidiarity Workshops

1. Executive Summary, synthesis and findings

Over the last twenty years, the role of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) as the advisory body representing local and regional authorities (LRAs) has evolved from a consultation by the European Commission on a final proposal only to a consultation at all stages of the European legislative process. This ongoing evolution has enabled the CoR to intervene not only in the pre-legislative process through territorial impact assessments (TIAs) and Outlook Opinions, but also at later stages of the legislative process through the follow-up of its Opinions notably. To this aim, among others, it monitors the local and regional implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy at the regional and local level, it promotes territorial cross-border cooperation, and it is vested with enhanced competences in the field of subsidiarity monitoring.[1]

To support the CoR in this endeavour, and to build up a knowledge base on the impact and the work of LRAs on the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy, territorial cooperation, and subsidiarity monitoring, the CoR has established three platforms/networks: the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, the Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) and the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN).

This study makes recommendations based on an evaluation of the activities of the CoR platforms and network[2] on 'how to better link their activities with the political work of the CoR in the mid-long term, focusing on what the platforms could deliver. In this context, it is invited to suggest how to make better use of these existing platforms for the benefit of the local and regional authorities in the EU, improving their effectiveness, visibility and political impact, looking at them from an external perspective. The study should focus more on the future rather than evaluate the work done until date, therefore it should be examined in the context of the future role of the CoR' and the [Challenges at the Horizon 2025] study.'[3]

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[1] For further information, see P. Schmitt, T. Ruys & A. Marx, 'Political participation, representation and the subsidiarity principle. The case of national and sub-national regional parliaments in the European Union after Lisbon', in R. Cordenillo & K. Gardes (eds.), *Inclusive Political Participation and Representation: The Role of Regional Organizations*, Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2013, pp. 161-189; E. Domorenok, 'The Committee of the Regions: In search of Identity', *Regional & Federal Studies* 19(1), 2009, pp. 143-164; C. Jeffery, 'Social and Regional Interests: ESC and Committee of the Regions', in J. Peterson & M. Shackleton (eds.), *The Institutions of the European Union* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002) pp. 326-346.

[2] The term 'network' is used in the singular form in this study given that it only refers to the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network.

[3] Order Form No. 5261.

This study builds upon information gathered via different sources. First, the websites and several CoR documents were consulted. Second, interviews were conducted with platforms' administrators, CoR Members, officials from political groups and members of the Direction for Consultative Works (DTC) of CoR. Third, a survey was conducted and sent out to the platform/network contacts. In doing so, this study was able to incorporate a wide variety of opinions and insights. Fourth, a workshop was organized by the CoR on 9 December 2014 on the theme 'CoR platforms and networks facing the future'. The target audience of this workshop was composed by CoR Members – platforms' governance, Members of the platforms/network partners, regional offices in Brussels and CoR administration. The authors of the present study presented preliminary findings of the study at this workshop and were able to collect interesting feedback from the workshop participants on some of these findings.

The first platform reviewed in this study is the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. This platform groups 177 cities and regions from the EU Member States. Its aim is to monitor the involvement of LRAs in the design and implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Generally speaking this Platform has worked well. It has collected input from the LRAs, which have provided strong support to the CoR to draft various documents, as the Athens Declaration. The latter have been extensively quoted in the EU debate and the Platform's inputs were explicitly acknowledged. However, it also faces some challenges including the necessity to maintain and strengthen the interest and ownership of LRAs in the Europe 2020 Strategy and mobilising the pertinent expertise and good practices/experiences from the local and regional level. In this view, the potential of the Platform may be developed in several directions. One of them could be the closer association of the Platform to TIAs relating to the renewed Europe 2020 Flagship Initiatives (FIs).[4] Moreover, in the Athens Declaration, the Bureau of the CoR asks that the 'progress of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy is monitored in a structured way in partnership by all relevant stakeholders, first of all the different levels of government, including sub-national governments.' This monitoring of the implementation of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy by the LRAs could be undertaken by the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. The involvement of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform in the pre-legislative phase including TIAs and Outlook Opinions could be further developed.

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[4] This development entails a revision of the FIs launched in 2010, as suggested in the 'Blueprint for a renewed Europe 2020 Strategy' adopted by the Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. In this view, the FIs should be reviewed 'to take stock of their implementation and outcome so far and to align them to the most recent policy developments and to the Europe 2020 headline targets'.

The second platform is the Platform of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation. This platform brings together all EGTCs, as well as other stakeholders. Its main objectives include the gathering of factual information on cross-border territorial issues, to support and promote the functioning and establishment of EGTCs, and to monitor EGTC legislation at the national level. According to the interviews and the survey, this platform has functioned well. However, one of its main challenges is to transform into a platform that can build upon the experiences and information available at cross-border regions. Now that it has reached a vast amount of registered contacts, it has started consulting these contacts more often in order to provide information that can feed into CoR Opinions.

The third, and last, network considered in this study is the SMN. This network includes 149 members. Its main objective is to facilitate the exchange of information on subsidiarity and proportionality analysis between local and regional authorities in the European Union and the Union level regarding legislative and non-legislative proposals from the European Commission which, once adopted, will have a direct impact on these authorities and the policies for which they are responsible. Once more its members have indicated to generally be pleased with the functioning of the network. One of the main challenges is to increase the interactions between the members. This is problematized by the fact that the subsidiarity analysis may be conducted in a slightly different way in each country on the basis of different cultural, technical or even organizational approaches, which may render the interaction difficult. Moreover, the linguistic differences between its partners may hinder the exchange of information. Another challenge consists in the systematization of the subsidiarity analysis on the basis of the expertise accumulated within the SMN. Such systematization may contribute to improving the quality and efficiency of the subsidiarity check by SMN partners.

This study further reveals that all three platforms/network analyzed in this study are facing some similar challenges, such as the tight timing of the legislative process. In practice, the consultation process may be too lengthy for the results to be taken into consideration in the preparation of CoR Opinions. Hence, the platforms/network have to be proactive. Moreover, the agendas of the different platforms/network and the CoR should be more integrated and take more into consideration the agenda of other EU institutions. In addition, a possible way forward could be to subdivide each platform/network in thematic clusters. Such functional division would allow closer cooperation and speed up the process. While the SMN already organizes regular Thematic Subsidiarity Workshops, one could suggest a division of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform into working groups following each of the renewed Europe 2020 FIs. As far as the

EGTC Platform is concerned, the creation of subgroups could eventually follow a number of common topics related to cross-border cooperation.

In addition to their involvement into the legislative consultative process of the CoR, the platforms/network analyzed in this study may also develop their potential in the pre-legislative phase, including TIAs and Outlook Opinions or Prospective Opinions.

In general, the strengthening of the links between CoR rapporteurs, CoR members and the platforms/network shall be fostered to increase the value-added of the platforms/network.

It has also been put forward that the platforms/network should strengthen the exchange of information among their members, be more interactive and develop more personal contacts with the LRAs' contact persons. The creation of a database of contact persons of the platforms/network members, as the one created in the 'Regional Parliamentary Exchange' (REGPEX) may be suggested in this view. Related, the website should be user-friendly and frequently updated.

Within the context of the European Parliament-CoR Agreement, the relation between the CoR platforms and the European Parliament could also be improved. In the framework of the Agreement with the European Parliament, new opportunities and synergies should be explored (e.g. studies). In addition, the platforms/network members could strive to promote the platforms/network and the issues discussed in bringing these issues more to the attention of the members' respective MEPs. This would strengthen the voice of the CoR, of the platforms and eventually of the platforms/network members.

Another central issue is the problem of translations. The CoR provides a systematic translation only for selected files. A possible solution would be for the CoR to provide for summary translations or cooperate with the members for translations of most documents.

These platforms/network can greatly support the CoR in building up the unique knowledge on LRAs this body has to offer to the European decision-making. Although they are generally well functioning, addressing these challenges will increase its impact on the EU decision-making process. This will in turn increase the platforms/network members' satisfaction, who might feel more compelled to provide higher quality contributions, leading to a spiral of positive spill-overs.

2. Introduction

2.1 Importance of platforms/network for the CoR

Set up by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the CoR held its inaugural plenary session in 1994. Over these twenty years, the CoR has evolved from a consultation by the European Commission on a final proposal only to a consultation at all stages of the European legislative process. More specifically, it monitors the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy at the regional and local level, it promotes territorial cross-border cooperation and it is vested with extensive responsibilities in the field of subsidiarity monitoring.[5]

The CoR reinforces its consultative and political powers notably by increasing the quality and the impact of its Opinions on the legislative process. Indeed, the weight of the CoR Opinions in the EU legislative process depends crucially on the quality and uniqueness of the information in the Opinions it provides.[6] Moreover, the CoR may intervene in the pre-legislative process through territorial impact assessments (TIAs) and Outlook Opinions, as well as at later stages of the legislative process through the follow-up of its Opinions notably.

To guarantee the quality and uniqueness of the information in these instruments, the latter build upon the CoR's unique expertise in dealing with LRAs. This expertise stems from up-to-date data gathering and analysis coming from LRAs. There is a total of over 90.000 LRAs throughout the EU.[7] To smoothen the processes of data gathering and data analysis, several platforms and networks were established that each have a unique objective and *raison d'être*: the Lisbon Platform (now the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform), the Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation and the SMN.

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[5] For further information, see P. Schmitt, T. Ruys & A. Marx, 'Political participation, representation and the subsidiarity principle. The case of national and sub-national regional parliaments in the European Union after Lisbon', in R. Cordenillo & K. Gardes (eds.), *Inclusive Political Participation and Representation: The Role of Regional Organizations*, Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2013, pp. 161-189; E. Domorenok, 'The Committee of the Regions: In search of Identity', *Regional & Federal Studies* 19(1), 2009, pp. 143-164; C. Jeffery, 'Social and Regional Interests: ESC and Committee of the Regions', in J. Peterson & M. Shackleton (eds.), *The Institutions of the European Union* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002) pp. 326-346.

[6] *Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning,* Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, T. Corthaut, P. Schmitt & A. Marx), 2014, available at http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning.pdf (EN), pp. 19-20. The figures of the SMN membership were updated to January 2015.

[7] http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/brochures/Documents/84fa6e84-0373-42a2-a801-c8ea83a24a72.pdf (EN).

In addition, the CoR has 350 Members and the same number of alternates, which represent a much wider number of regions and cities of the EU. The platforms/network are a tool to promote the participation of LRAs which are represented in the CoR or not and this in three key issues: the Europe 2020 Strategy, which is the backbone of the action of the EU, the EGTCs and cross-border cooperation and the subsidiarity or the distribution of competences within the EU administrative layers.

The CoR draws on the 177 members of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, on the partners that are part of the Register of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation and on the 149 partners of the SMN. The platforms/network allow the CoR to reinforce its unique expertise and strengthen its voice on the local and regional impact in their respective issue fields. The platforms/network enable the CoR to base its expertise on a rich and continuous feed of quantitative and qualitative data that back up the arguments defended in the CoR Opinions. These Opinions may have an indirect influence on the policy priorities of EU institutions. The amount of influence the CoR will be able to exercise critically hangs on the strong and unique expertise the CoR has developed in the matter. The platforms/network are of course only one of the options to improve the CoR's expert functions,[8] but they have become important interaction and expertise building tools.

2.2   Aim of the study

Based on an evaluation of the activities of the CoR platforms and network, this study makes 'recommendations on how to better link their activities with the political work of the CoR in the mid-long term, focusing on what the platforms could deliver.' In this context, the study suggests 'how to make better use of these existing platforms for the benefit of the local and regional authorities in the EU, improving its effectiveness, visibility and political impact, looking at them from an external perspective. The study should focus more on the future rather than evaluate the work done until date, therefore it should be examined in the context of the future role of the CoR' and the [Challenges at the Horizon 2025] study.'[9]

The three platforms/network of the CoR examined in this study – the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, the EGTC Platform and the SMN – were set up in order to support and reinforce the work of the CoR. Over the years, these platforms/network have evolved, making it appropriate to take stock of their

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[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Order Form No. 5261.

realizations, and challenges with a forward-looking focus. This is the ambition of the current study.

In a previously-released CoR study on 'Challenges at the Horizon 2025', it has been noted that '[a]s an advisory body, the consultative role is likely to gain in importance based on its representative function and voice of the LRAs. Moreover, the CoR will be increasingly consulted for its network capabilities as coordinator, interlocutor, mediator and expert.'[10] Hence, the potential of the platforms/network is also examined in this study in relation to the future role of the CoR.

2.3   Methodology

In order to conduct the research project, information was gathered through several sources.

First, the websites and several CoR documents were consulted. They are referenced in the footnotes.

Second, this study is further based on information gathered through semi-structured interviews with the platforms' administrators, CoR Members, officials from political groups, members of the DTC conducted in November and December 2014. The first interviews with the platform/network administrators at the CoR were conducted in the beginning of November. The weeks afterwards, several more interviews were conducted with other stakeholders. Three interviews with members from the DTC were organized. Three members of the Subsidiarity Expert Group were interviewed. From the more political side, five interviews were conducted with people from the political groupings. An additional interview was done with a member of the platforms/network.

Third, an online survey of the platform/network members was conducted: https://nl.surveymonkey.com/s/CoRnetworks. The survey was carried out in consultation with the CoR, and contained questions concerning the platform/network members' perception of the functioning of the platforms/network. More specific, the survey asked the participants to rate their satisfaction with a number of aspects of the platforms/network. It also inquired to the need of reforms in the area of these different aspects. Participation was

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[10] *Challenges at the Horizon 2025*, Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, A. Marx, P. Schmitt & K. Raube), 2014, available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/challenges-horizon-2025.pdf (EN), p. 25.

voluntary and we allowed participants to remain anonymous. Invitations to participate were sent out to all the members. The survey can be found in part 5 of this study.

Most of the questions were closed and required participants to scale or rate certain aspects of the functioning. However, space was provided at several instances in the survey in order to gather more qualitative suggestions and information. This enabled the respondents to note down any remarks and suggestions they had.

The survey was sent by the CoR administration to all members of the three platforms/network examined in this study. In total we received 97 responses. After cleaning out the data, and omitting double responses or empty responses, 81 responses were considered in our analysis. 53 responses were allocated to EGTC[11] (47 premium participants and in some cases several responses from the same EGTC), 16 allocated to Europe 2020 and 11 to SMN.

The results (both quantitative as well as qualitative input) are included in this study. Although, due to the rather low number of completed questionnaires for two of the three platforms/network, these results should be taken aboard as only indicative and suggestive. They give an interesting account of the perception of platform/network member, but do not necessarily imply a representative view.

Moreover, a workshop was organized by the CoR on 9 December 2014 on the theme 'CoR platforms and networks facing the future'. The target audience of this work was composed by CoR Members – platforms' governance, Members of the platforms/network partners, regional offices in Brussels and CoR administration. The authors of the present study presented preliminary findings of the study at this workshop and were able to collect interesting feedback from the workshop participants on some of these findings.

2.4   Structure of the study

The rest of this study is structured as follows: the next part provides an analysis of the three platforms/network. For each of the different platforms/network, the study follows a similar structure to allow for easier comparison. In the same part, the study outlines some major similarities and differences between the platforms/network. Building on this, the study also compares the platforms/network with similar platforms in other EU institutions as well as

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[11] The authors of this study welcome the high level of participation of EGTCs in the survey, but cannot identify a clear explanation justifying this massive participation.

external platforms. Next, the study presents the challenges and the potential of the platforms/network in light of the future of the CoR, discussed in the CoR studies on 'Challenges at the Horizon 2025'[12] and on 'the Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning'.[13] The study concludes with some general conclusions in part 4 and the presentation of the 'Survey on the Europe 2020 Platform, the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN) and the Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)' in part 5.

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[12] *Challenges at the Horizon 2025*, Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, A. Marx, P. Schmitt & K. Raube), 2014, available at: http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/challenges-horizon-2025.pdf (EN).
[13] *Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning,* Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, T. Corthaut, P. Schmitt & A. Marx), 2014, available at: http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning.pdf (EN).

3. Analysis and perspectives of the platforms/network

3.1 Findings on the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform

3.1.1 Objectives – mission and intervention logic of the platform

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform[14] was set up by the CoR in 2010 as a successor of the former Lisbon Monitoring Platform (LMP). The LMP had been established in 2006 to assess the involvement of the LRAs in the design and implementation of the Lisbon Strategy.[15] In March 2010, the European Commission proposed the Europe 2020 Strategy as a successor to the Lisbon Strategy.[16] In the same way, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform succeeded to the LMP in 2010.

Its main task is to monitor the involvement of LRAs in the design and implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The ambition is to feed the results of this monitoring exercise (a) into the CoR institutional work, and (b) present these results to the LRAs. The former mainly takes place by providing input into CoR Opinions and other political documents. The latter mainly takes place through the annual Monitoring Report,[17] as well as in the course of some public debates, which allow for exchanges of experiences, benchmarking and mutual learning between LRAs. The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform enables the CoR to build up its expertise on the regional and local impact of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

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[14] The website of the Platform is available at http://www.cor.europa.eu/europe2020 (EN).

[15] The LMP was launched by the CoR at its first Territorial Dialogue on 1 March 2006. As described in the CoR brochure 'Committee of the Regions – Lisbon Monitoring Platform. The Growth and Jobs Strategy on the Ground', the LMP was 'an operational tool for regional and local authorities. It contains detailed and wide-ranging regional statistical data, a documentation centre and interactive electronic forums, through which regional/local representatives are able to exchange information on Lisbon-related subjects.' It was intended to run at least until 2008, at the end of the first 3-year governance cycle. For further information, see https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/pub/Documents/LMP%20Brochures/2006/Brochure%20LMP.pdf.

[16] 'The Europe 2020 Strategy consists of two central elements: the Europe 2020 policy cycle to increase the co-ordination of European and national reform programmes and the Flagship initiatives […], which combine the specific policies towards reaching the Europe 2020 objectives. The [Flagship initiatives] are complemented by actions to remove bottlenecks to growth (in the fields of the internal market and infrastructure).' See the Decision of the Committee of the Regions Bureau, Item 8a) implementing Europe 2020 in partnership – revised strategy for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the Communication Plan. For further information on the Europe 2020 Strategy, see also:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF (EN).

[17] The 5th CoR Monitoring Report on EU 2020 (October 2014) is available at:
 https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/SiteCollectionDocuments/COR-2014-05553-00-00-INFO-EDI_final_061014.pdf (EN).

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform aims to fulfill its objectives by regularly consulting the members of the Platform and by organizing events where Platform members can voice their opinions and concerns regarding the Europe 2020 policy process. The consultations of the Platform members carried out by the Platform are then analyzed and can feed into the CoR Opinions with a view to inform European policy-makers.

In the past, the surveys of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform fed into several issues of the annual CoR Monitoring Report on Europe 2020 as well as several CoR Opinions and political positions across the whole policy cycle of Europe 2020.[18] For instance, in view of the mid-term review of Europe 2020, and in order to lead to proposals for a revised strategy in February 2015, the Platform has supported the preparation of the CoR's Athens Declaration 'A territorial vision for growth and jobs' (7 March 2014) and the accompanying Mid-Term Assessment Report of Europe 2020.[19] The Platform's tasks in this undertaking included carrying out online consultation of the LRAs, one for each of the strategy's FIs. The consultations of the Platform were rather successful. For instance, the final one before the Athens Declaration on '**Towards a mid-term assessment of Europe 2020 from the standpoint of EU cities and regions'** received more than 1100 contributions. Some of these consultations have targeted a wider audience by using an additional database – INTERREG. In addition to these consultations, several workshops and external studies on the Europe 2020 Strategy were organized. Moreover, several exchanges of information with DG Regio and other DGs of the European Commission were conducted.

The majority of the interviewees considered that the Platform has been relatively successful in gathering information from LRAs on the Europe 2020 Strategy.

As to its future development, in the Athens Declaration, the Bureau of the CoR asked that the 'progress of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy is monitored in a structured way in partnership by all relevant stakeholders, first of all the different levels of government, including sub-national governments.' This monitoring of the implementation of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy by the LRAs could be undertaken by the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. Indeed, the territorial dimension of Europe 2020 has expressly been recalled in the Athens Declaration, in which the Bureau of the CoR further explained that growth can only be achieved through a place-based approach with regionally

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[18] Decision of the Committee of the Regions Bureau, 7 September 2012, 'Item 8a) implementing Europe 2020 in partnership – Revised strategy for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the communication plan.
[19] Available at http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Documents/2210-athens-declaration-a5.pdf (EN).

differentiated targets. Hence, the Bureau called for 'the introduction of a "territorial dimension" for Europe 2020, setting territorially differentiated targets so that regions and cities contribute to country targets building on their starting points and potentials.'

According to the concrete proposals formulated in the 'Blueprint for a renewed Europe 2020 Strategy' adopted by the Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform,[20] 'the FIs be given a **central place in the governance of EU policies**. They should be used as effective levers to enhance policy coordination at all levels in the design and implementation of the strategy. The different levels of government, including sub-national levels, should be encouraged to work in partnership with one another and their roles should be clearly identified. The seven FIs launched in 2010 should be reviewed to this end, to take stock of their implementation and outcome so far and to align them to the most recent policy developments and to the Europe 2020 headline targets'.[21] Each of the renewed Europe 2020 FIs should be subject to a TIA. A TIA has been defined 'a tool for assessing the impact of spatial development against spatial policy objectives or prospects for an area.'[22] In a consultation of the SMN on the Assessment of Territorial Impact, a majority of respondents considered that such assessment should be made compulsory for policies being more susceptible of having a territorial impact. Moreover, some respondents considered that EU 2020 objectives could be taken as a guide to determine which policies should involve a TIA.[23]

In this view, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform could be closely associated to these TIAs, both in consulting its members on their opinion relating to the selection of policies submitted to TIAs and in reinforcing the analysis of LRAs in impact assessments.

Finally, another possible avenue to future developments for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform may be to develop expert group-based policy advice within the context of the forthcoming mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Pursuant to this view, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform could focus on specific topics with specialized views expressed by experts.

In general, these directions – which will be further developed in point 3.6.3.1 of this study – show the potential of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and

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[20] Available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/SiteCollectionDocuments/2459-brochure-BlueprintEU2020.pdf (EN).
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 19 (emphasis in the original text).
[22] Report on the consultation of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network: Assessment of Territorial Impact, rapporteur Mr Michael Schneider (DE/EPP).
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

pave the road to interesting future developments of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform's activities.

3.1.2 Functioning of the platform in general

In general, the surveyed Platform members are rather satisfied with the functioning of the Platform (see figure 1 and table 1).[24]
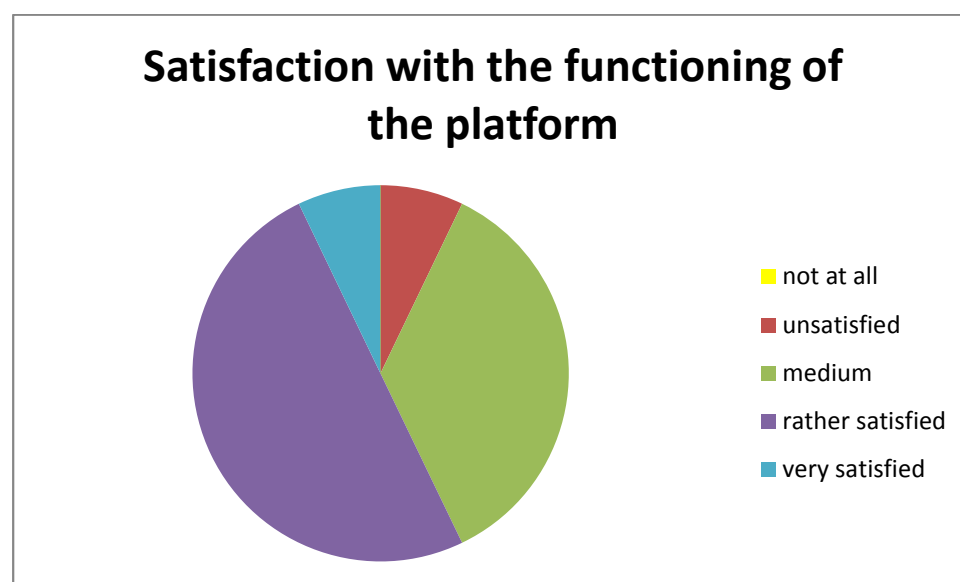
Figure 1: Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform (n=14)

Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.07
medium	0.36
rather satisfied	0.50
very satisfied	0.07

Table 1: Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform in percentages (n=14)

3.1.3 Structure

The Platform has a broad membership. It brings together 177 LRAs from the different EU Member States and 9 observers (associations). Adhesion to the Platform is totally voluntary. Hence, its membership is not statistically representative and some of the EU Member States are better represented than

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[24] As indicated in the methodology, the low number of completed questionnaires for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform implies that these results should be taken aboard as only indicative and suggestive. They give an interesting account of the perception of platform/network members, but do not necessarily imply a representative view.

others. In practice, one notes that there exists a core group of certain very active authorities, whereas other members mostly remain relatively passive.

The Platform revolves around a mailing list. On a few occasions and only when this was deemed to be justified, a wider database – INTERREG – has been used. The Platform is managed by a team of three people within the E2 Unit at the CoR, supported by interns and a part time webmaster.

3.1.4 Governance

Pursuant to decisions taken at the Bureau meetings in October 2010 and September 2011,[25] the Platform has a political coordinator, a Steering Committee and a Task Force.

The political coordinator reports once a year to the CoR Bureau on the activity and working programme of the Platform. The coordinator has to ensure that this working programme is shared and owned within the CoR, both at the political and the administrative levels. He also helps to promote the outcome of the Platform's monitoring activity externally, notably in the dialogue between the CoR and the EU institutions. The coordinator is supported by a Steering Committee.

The political Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 includes the coordinator and one political representative from each political group, which these groups appoint.

The Steering Committee ensures the wide internal ownership of the decisions taken by the political coordinator. The Steering Committee meets at least twice a year and the meetings are coupled with other planned events, e.g. annual workshop and Open Days workshop.

The meetings of the Steering Committee were initially more formal, but have recently more revolved around discussions and debate. This change has spurred its members to show more interest and involvement. The members of the Steering Committee were particularly involved during the drafting of the Mid-term review of Europe 2020. During the workshops that were organized in preparation of this review, the Steering Committee members were put in the lead of discussions.

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[25] R/CdR 235/2011 pt 8a, September 2011, Bureau memo, Annual report on the implementation of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform's Rolling Programme, available at:
http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/news/Pages/UpdateoRollingPrograme.aspx (EN).

Given that members are assigned by the political groupings to the Steering Committee, members may be forced to leave the Committee because of the end of their electoral mandate. In general, the Task Force is more focused on the content than the Steering Committee.

The CoR's administrative Task Force on Europe 2020 includes representatives from the Secretariats of the Committee's Political Groups as well as other relevant CoR services. It is chaired by the Head of Unit of CoR Unit E2 and ensures internal coordination between the relevant CoR services and the political groups, and provides administrative support to the Platform's political coordinator.

In general, the work of the CoR administration is well perceived by the Platform members. It has been put forward by an interviewee from political groupings that the Platform team might be understaffed in order to make the Platform work perfectly.

Obviously, increasing staff would allow the team to be more productive, but this does not seem to be the main problem, namely the short time spans in which the consultations need to take place. The mismatch between Opinions' and surveys' timelines implies that it has often proved to be practically incompatible to set a reasonable deadline, which would leave enough time to respondents, and still fit into the rapporteur's timetable. This is especially true for open questions. Multiple-choice and online surveys make it simpler for the administration to process the information and to cooperate with the rapporteurs in an efficient manner.

3.1.5 Outputs and results

3.1.5.1 Events

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team organizes regular events, presented in the annual reports including conferences, meetings and workshops related to the Platform's work.

In 2015, the team will organize *inter alia* these future events:

- the Territorial Dialogue on Europe 2020 (10th edition in 2015), which consists of a top-level meeting between a CoR delegation and the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission. In the past, the Platform members were also involved in the territorial dialogue. However, the outcome of this process for the Platform was negligible.

Hence, the territorial dialogue has been shifted towards a top-level meeting as described above and takes place behind closed doors.

- the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform's annual Workshop to discuss issues in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy from the standpoint of the LRAs;

- the Open Days workshop (2015 Dialogue with think-tanks), which has taken the form of a "Dialogue with think-tanks" on selected topics related to Europe 2020;

- the workshop on the involvement of LRA in the European Semester cycle – meeting with European Semester Officers;

- the thematic workshops with colleagues from other EU Institutions and representatives of LRAs depending on the work programme of the team and emerging political issues (e.g. meetings with selected directorates general of the European Commission to analyze the state of the implementation of Europe 2020 FIs).[26]

As mentioned by a member of the Platform, these events are in general very interesting and well-organized. However, due to recent budget cuts it is increasingly difficult to invite Platform members to Brussels. For this reason, the CoR is currently testing the system of webinars. A Platform member also stressed the need to make it more visible that the Platform has supported or organized certain events. Another member requested more active involvement of the Platform members in the preparation of the Platform's events.

3.1.5.2 Studies, annual reports and other publications

The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team produces a number of documents and various inputs to the consultative work carried out at the CoR. Some of the projects are planned in an annual cycle and have consequently gained more external visibility, as for instance:

- The yearly publication of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Report;

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[26] In principle, external workshops will also be organized in 2016 in at least two Member States that build on the analysis carried out by the Europe 2020 team and on the political recommendations of the CoR in cooperation with the relevant CoR National Delegation and the European Commission's Semester Officers in that country.

- Handbook for LRAs on Europe 2020 (1st edition in 2012, 2nd edition in 2014[27] and 3rd edition in 2016). The Handbook has been well received and incorporates good practices of the Platform members. However, there have been calls for translation in more languages, which will only be feasible once the budgetary means are available;

- Reports with results of thematic surveys in support to the work carried out by CoR Members (e.g. input to Opinions and Declarations);

- Reports on the review of the strategy or other relevant developments (e.g. CoR Europe 2020 Mid-term review).

3.1.5.3 Surveys

The main inputs from the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform into the work of the CoR are the surveys whereby the Platform members are consulted. The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team is responsible for developing, distributing, analyzing and disseminating surveys which are relevant for the implementation of the strategy. The results of the surveys feed into political declarations and Opinions of the CoR.

Examples of the surveys carried out recently include:

- National co-financing of EU Programmes in 2014-2020 MFF (resulted in 321 replies from 27 MS, no answer from Luxemburg);
- Execution of the EU budget (resulted in 427 replies from 27 MS, no answer from Luxemburg);
- Negotiation and drafting partnership agreements (resulted in 44 replies from 23 MS, the target group was different than the two above, respondents had to be officially involved in the negotiations and drafting of the partnership agreements' documents).

Moreover, there is an ongoing survey on the LRAs' involvement in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes 2014-2020. Another survey is about to be launched, in cooperation with the OECD, on how to make public investments in infrastructure more effective.

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[27] CoR, Delivering on the Europe 2020 Strategy. Handbook for Local and Regional Authorities, 2nd edition, 2014, available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/SiteCollectionDocuments/EU2020%20Handbook%2c%202nd%20Edition%202014.pdf (EN).

Since 2010, the surveys of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform have fed into several CoR Monitoring Reports on Europe 2020 as well as several CoR Opinions and political positions across the whole policy cycle of Europe 2020.[28] The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team has provided input to political notes presented to CoR Members nominated as rapporteurs for specific Opinions. For instance, the results of the online survey/consultation on the execution of the EU budget, carried out by the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team were directly quoted in the BUDG-V-007, 107th plenary session, 25-26 June 2014, CoR Opinion on the execution of the EU budget. In this Opinion, rapporteur Mr A. Struzik (PL/EPP) '(…) notes that, in order to improve the quality of the opinion, a survey was carried out among local and regional authorities (LRAs),[29] which [was] met with significant response; this reflects the level of interest in this issue and points to a desire to cooperate on identifying solutions to the problems and drawing on the potential which lies within the territorial approach; (…) in accordance with the survey's findings, declares its readiness to be an active participant in the key discussions conducted at European level and a credible partner for the Member States and EU institutions during the preparation and implementation of the EU budget. (…)'.

In the past, most surveys were qualitative oriented with open questions. These were however rather time-consuming for participants, and at the time of the surveys on the seven FIs, the administrators at the CoR discovered a certain survey fatigue.

For this reason, in recent years, quantitative surveys with multiple choices were conducted in combination with – or sometimes instead of – open questionnaires. A possible problem with this approach is that quantitative surveys tend to strengthen the top-down approach. Hence, it might be interesting to involve the Platform members in the selection of questions and proposed answer possibilities to a certain extent.

Occasionally, the number of addressees has been significantly enlarged in the past with the use of a broader database, the INTERREG mailing list. Yet, this wider database was only used on selected occasions when this was deemed to be justified. The two databases have thus not been merged. In general, survey invitations are only sent out to the Platform members. However, sometimes they are sent out to all representations of regions and cities in Brussels, as well as

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[28] Decision of the Committee of the Regions Bureau, Item 8a) implementing Europe 2020 in partnership – revised strategy for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the Communication Plan.

[29] Results of the online survey/consultation on the execution of the EU budget, Committee of the Regions; Unit E.2 – Subsidiarity Network / Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform / Covenant of Mayors / EGTC. The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform Team.

their national and European associations. This has increased the number of responses tenfold. Over the last years, several surveys were sent out (Mid-Term review Europe 2020 and the seven FIs). The administrators of the Platform feel that a possible downside to this larger mailing list is the fact that it gets very appealing to consult the mailing list more regularly, even for issues not directly linked to the work of the Europe 2020 Platform. This might have increased survey fatigue, in particular since only the last few surveys were quantitative. Yet, members can still decide not to participate to these surveys.

Another issue is that there is rather limited time for analysis of the results of the surveys. This is a bigger issue for qualitative surveys as the responses to such consultations might need to be translated. In that instance, linguistic issues make the analysis even more time-consuming. The seven FIs for example had to be translated in all EU languages, making it more demanding and time-consuming.

For the future, it is clear that both types of surveys can serve different needs. Quantitative surveys can be used as a thermometer in order to quickly grasp a basic perception of the ideas of LRAs and their issues in the implementation of Europe 2020 initiatives. Qualitative surveys are better suited to collect broad ideas on for example future developments. In the end, the outcome of quantitative surveys will generally always be in the middle, which has also been translated as such in the results of the Platforms work. Therefore, an administrator at the DTC has argued in favor of in-depth case studies instead of quantitative surveys.

For both types of surveys, it should be noted that the questionnaires are prepared by the CoR administration. Representatives of the political groups sitting in the Task Force of the Platform are involved in the process, with all the questionnaires submitted to them in advance. They may suggest changes to the questionnaires. Since more than a year, in particular with surveys directly linked to CoR Opinions, there have also been direct consultations with the rapporteurs and their experts with the assistance of DTC administrators.

The validation of the results is done by the Task Force and the Steering Committee after a survey has taken place. Members themselves are not consulted for the practical follow-up, for example in Opinions etc. Yet, they are informed as the outcomes of the surveys are distributed to the Platform members – not to the bigger mailing list. The results are also printed and handed out at conferences and workshops. Also, all outcomes are downloadable on the website.

3.1.5.4 External Studies

Within the framework contracts, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform team outsources part of the analytical work by commissioning studies on Europe 2020 related topics, as the Analysis of the 2015 National Reform Programmes and External support for the entirely renewed Handbook on Europe 2020.

3.1.5.5 Other outputs

In general, the above mentioned elements – events, publications, surveys and studies – may translate directly into other types of outputs. They are notably mentioned in paragraphs or shorter parts of text in the Opinions/declarations or other official statements of the CoR, resolutions of the European Parliament as well as dedicated sections of the European Commission's publications.

3.1.6 Relevance: value added and usefulness

So far, the CoR administrators including the DTC members feel that no survey has been disappointing, as they were always able to get some information out of the surveys. The fact that the surveys are voluntarily results in the consequence that members which are particularly interested by the issue reply and prepare their answer very well, which increases the quality of information. Rather remarkably, it has been found that sometimes even the members of the Steering Committee do not reply to the consultations.

Ideally, the results of the consultations should feed into the legislative work. However, in practice, the consultation process may be too lengthy for the results to be taken into consideration.

It has been proposed that working in thematic clusters would increase members' participation while at the same time hold the potential to generate more useful feedback. This could provide a fruitful direction for the future, and could help the Platform to find a new niche.

Platform members are in general satisfied with the follow-up of the contributions on the Platform, as demonstrated by the graph below (see figure 2 and table 2).
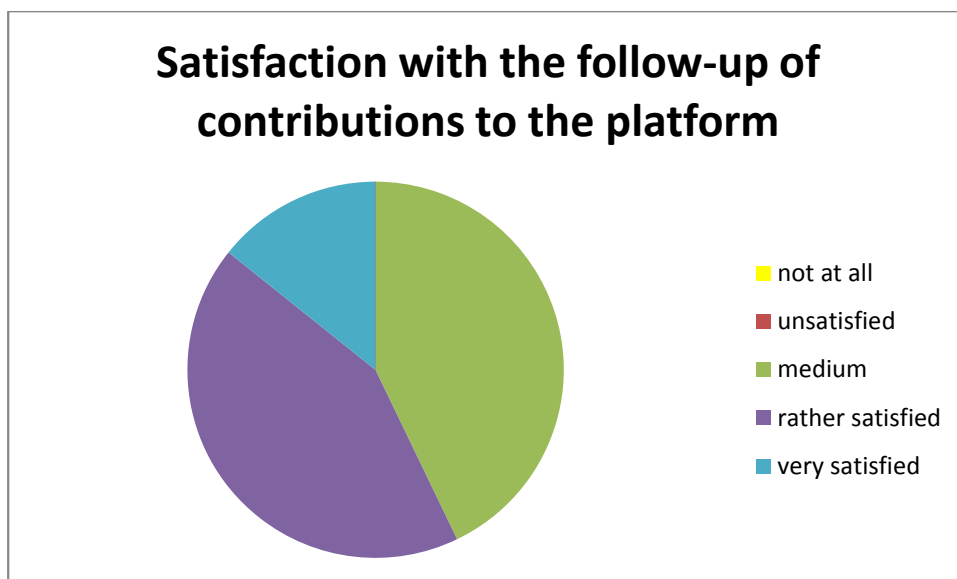
Figure 2: Satisfaction with the follow-up of contributions to the Platform (n=14)

Satisfaction with follow-up on contributions	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.00
medium	0.43
rather satisfied	0.43
very satisfied	0.14

Table 2: Satisfaction with the follow-up of contributions to the Platform in percentages (n=14)

Yet, from the perspective of Platform members, it has been noted that over the years, the privileges of being a Platform member have become much more limited. Until a few years ago, Platform members could regularly be invited to meetings in Brussels. Nowadays, this has become more difficult because of budgetary constraints. Still, the Platform members have the advantage of being continuously informed and updated on the work of the CoR on Europe 2020.

Certain interviewees from political groupings deplore the fact that they do not have access to the complete results of the surveys but only to the analysis made by the CoR administration. Hence, they are not informed of the individual positions of the members of the Platform – except if these partners contact the members of the political groupings themselves. Consequently, some potential useful and important information might get lost. A suggestion to overcome this issue would be to add a disclaimer about the possibility of divulgating the responses of members of the Platform. On the other hand, such solution could also have the adverse effect of refraining members from issuing their position on the Platform. As a conclusion, it seems that the current system should be maintained. An alternative solution could be to offer the choice to members in their responses to divulgate their individual response or not.

3.1.7 Expert groups

There is no expert group in the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform. It has been considered to work with subgroupings but the heavy work programme due to the engagement with the mid-term review has postponed such an approach.

3.1.8 Members

The Platform has a broad membership since it enjoys the voluntary contribution of 177 cities and regions from all European Member States. It is interesting to note that the Platform has also been able to attract stakeholders beyond the CoR Members.

There is in particular a strong participation from the Southern European LRAs. Since the members are not so well distributed across Europe, one may fear that the Platform faces a problem of representativeness. However, the CoR has never claimed surveys to be statistically representative. Rather, their outcomes have always been presented as the opinion of a voluntary panel. To this purpose, only mainstream positions are considered solid enough to be stressed when commenting results.

According to the results of the survey, all Platform members who responded to the survey were at least medium satisfied with the geographical distribution of members and more than one third were rather satisfied (see figure 3 and table 3).
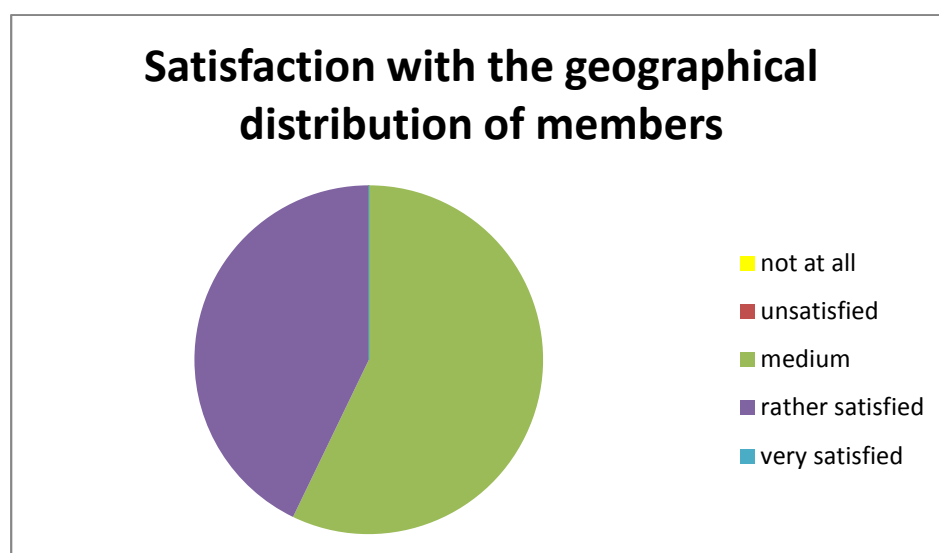

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the geographical distribution of members (n=14)

Satisfaction with geographical distribution of members	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.00
medium	0.57
rather satisfied	0.43
very satisfied	0.00

Table 3: Satisfaction with the geographical distribution of members in percentages (n=14)

The surveyed Platform members also indicated their main reasons for joining the Platform (see figure 4). As shown below, the most important reasons to join are to address challenges in the implementation of EU policies (all surveyed members at least rated this as important), exchange information with the CoR (also all rated important at least, but in general rated less important than the challenges in the implementation of EU policies). Next, the interaction with other members, and to increase the visibility were deemed rather important followed by the objective to increase the impact of the members' work on the CoR. EU project partner search was deemed much less important.
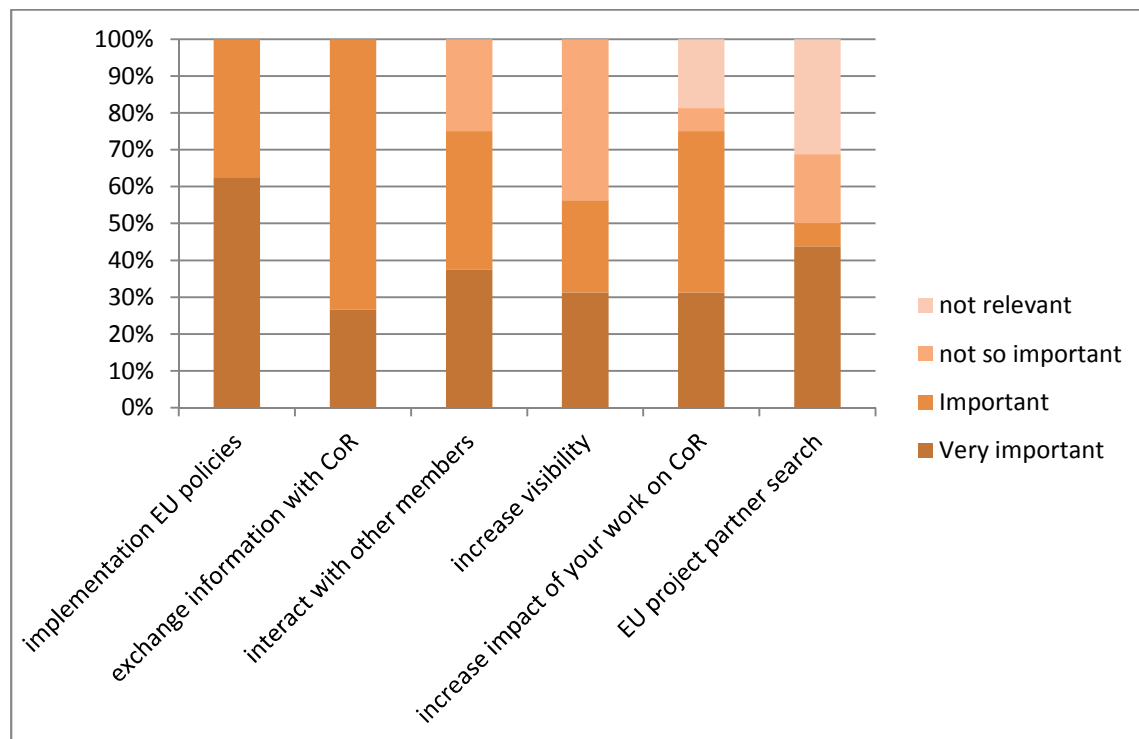

Figure 4: Reasons for joining the Platform (n=16)

3.1.9 Good practices

Some surveys have been taken up as good practices.

The surveys on the FIs have been identified as a good practice. In particular, the combination of differing types of surveys (qualitative/quantitative) for the different FIs has been appreciated.

In terms of results, the survey on the execution of the budget, which was requested by the rapporteur Mr Adam Struzik (PL/EPP) proved to be a good practice.[30] In particular, several people feel that the approach whereby the rapporteur makes direct use of the Platform is preferred in terms as in that case, the results are much better incorporated and feed more directly into the work of the CoR.

3.1.10 Visibility

The Platform's outputs have been used in speeches, documents and press conferences by the CoR. The Platform has also been mentioned in several official documents issued by other EU bodies, as the EUROSTAT Regional Yearbook 2014 and the 6th Cohesion Report. One may also observe that the Cooperation Agreement between the CoR and the European Commission mentions the Monitoring Report of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform.[31]

The general perception of the Platform members and political groupings is that the Platform is rather well known by insiders. The vast majority of the Platform members is satisfied with the visibility of the Platform, as shown by the graph below (see figure 5 and table 4).

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[30]https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/Documents/Survey%20results,%20implementation%20of%20EU%20Budget.pdf (EN).

[31] Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, 16 February 2012, http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/interinstitutional/Documents/EN.pdf (EN).
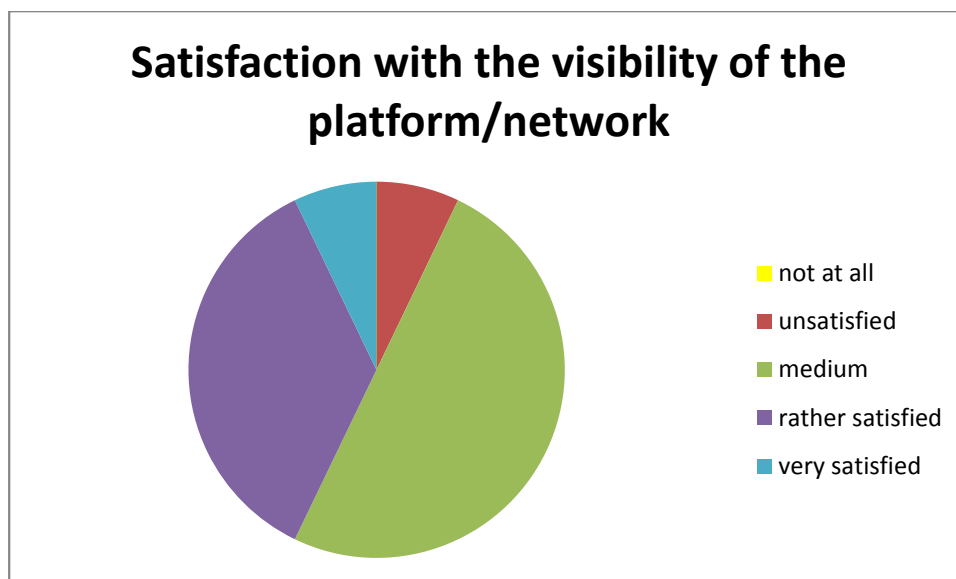
Figure 5: Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform (n=14)

Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.07
medium	0.50
rather satisfied	0.36
very satisfied	0.07

Table 4: Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform in percentages (n=14)

However, it is worth pointing out that the Platforms' output is placed in different places on the Platform's website. Some Platform members feel that it might be useful to create dedicated pages so it is easier for them to keep track of the output, and how it has been taken up in the political work of the CoR. The Platform administrators and the members also feel that the communication can be improved. Communication is too often carried out by using rather standardized emails. For instance, the administrators have set up a LinkedIn group on the social network.

In terms of visibility of the Platform members, some Platform members are mentioned in the reports whereby they have been named as contributors. Also, they have sometimes been invited to Brussels to present their points of view. However, due to budgetary cuts, it is no longer possible to invite Platform members regularly. Due to these budget cuts, it might be interesting to look more into creating thematic clusters with webinars and an online forum as support. This would also increase the possibility of Platform members to distribute their individual work.

In terms of visibility in the Opinions of the CoR, it needs to be said that the results of the consultations have not too often been mentioned. However,

consultations have provided input in relevant Opinions on the topic, even when a clear reference to the work of the Platform has not often taken place.

3.1.11 Timing

Ideally, the results of the consultations should feed into the legislative work and fit in the calendar. Yet, these consultations are time- and effort-consuming.

As mentioned in the point 3.1.4, it is a challenge to set up a reasonable deadline leaving enough time to respondents, but still fitting into the rapporteur's timetable. As mentioned earlier, multiple-choice and online surveys may speed up the process as opposed to questionnaires based on open questions.

3.1.12 Impact on the political work of CoR

Ideally, the results of the consultations should feed into the legislative work via the Opinions delivered by the CoR. Unfortunately, the consultation process may be too lengthy for the results to be taken into consideration in the legislative work. Moreover, officials from political groups have to translate these results into political considerations, which may in certain cases be very technical. This hurts the direct impact the Platform can or should have on EU decision-making.

Moreover, it should be stressed that the consultations of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform may provide useful information to the CoR not exclusively for Opinions raised in the legislative consultative process but they may similarly feed TIAs, as well as Prospective Opinions on future European policies or Outlook Opinions delivered by the CoR. For instance, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform recently contributed to an Outlook Opinion on Multilevel governance in promoting the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and implementing the international Aichi targets.[32] Outlook Opinions may be requested by the European Commission to feed its upstream preparations for EU draft legislation. As mentioned in the Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, '[t]he Commission welcomes a more proactive role for the Committee through outlook opinions on future Union policies before action is taken at Union level and in areas where the Committee has appropriate local information resources. […] The time limit for such a consultation may not be less than one month from the date on which the Committee's President receives notification to this effect. […]'[33]

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[32] COR-2013-08074-00-00-AC-TRA (EN) 1/14 , Rapporteur: Ms Kadri Tillemann (EE/EPP).
[33] Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, 16 February 2012, http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/interinstitutional/Documents/EN.pdf (EN).

As mentioned in point 3.1.1, it is submitted that the acknowledgment of the importance of the territorial dimension in Europe 2020 in the Athens Declaration and the increasing importance of TIAs offer a wide array of future opportunities to the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform in addition to its previously discussed role, namely providing the CoR with useful information stemming from LRAs in order to feed its Opinions in the consultative process and its Prospective or Outlook Opinions.

All Platform members that replied to the survey were at least medium satisfied with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR (see figure 6 and table 5).
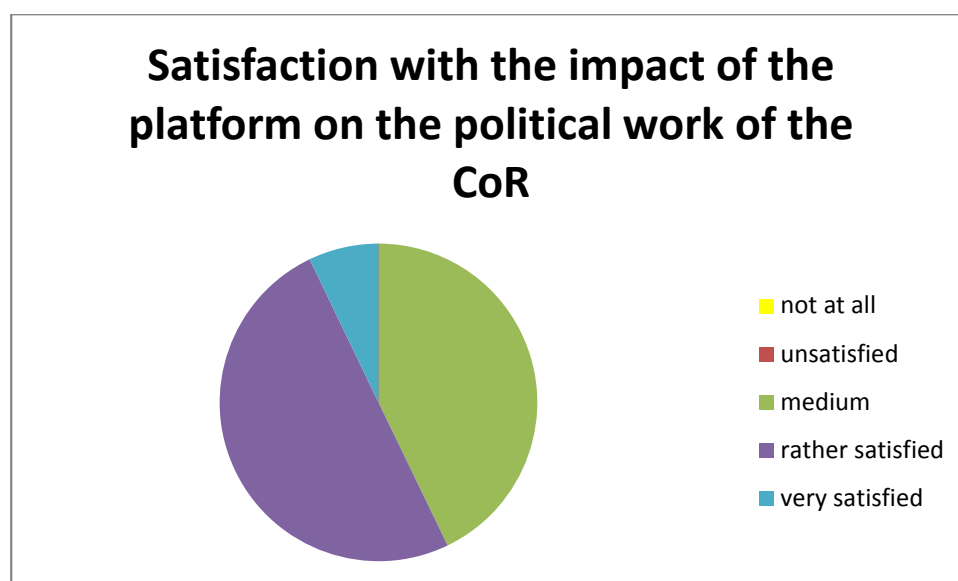

Figure 6: Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR (n=14)

Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the work of the CoR	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.00
medium	0.43
rather satisfied	0.50
very satisfied	0.07

Table 5: Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR in percentages (n=14)

3.1.13 Networking capacity

The members feel that the Platform has not really increased the networking capacity between the Platform members. They do meet during the events, but most of the members already know each other quite well since most of them work in Brussels. Yet, they generally consider the interactions with other members as one of the most important reasons for joining the Platform (see

graph in point 3.1.8.) and would like this issue to be reformed (see graph in point 3.1.16). Moreover, some members pointed that the role of the Platform as organizer of events should be better highlighted.

As shown below (see figure 7 and table 6), the majority of the members who replied to the survey are medium satisfied with the interactions, while an important part of the remaining members are rather unsatisfied or not at all satisfied with this point.
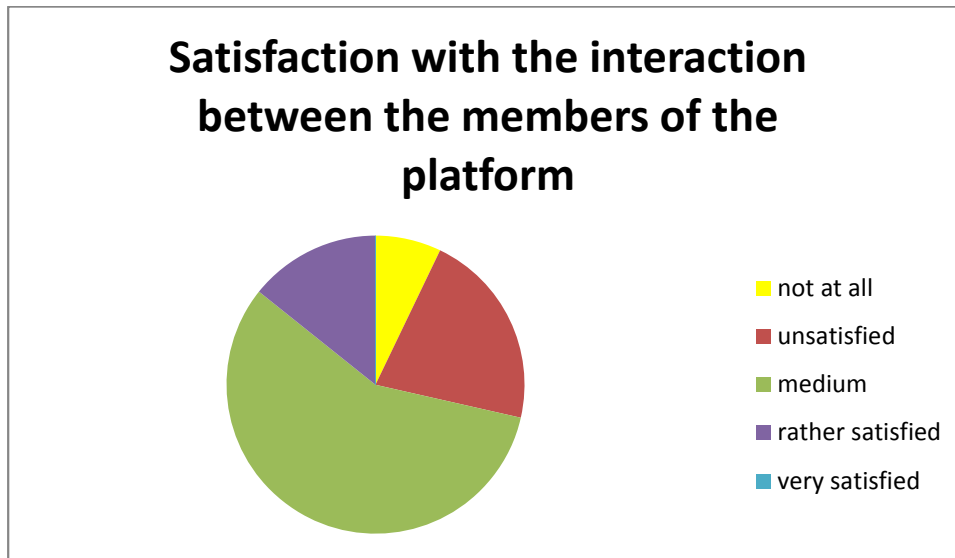

Figure 7: Satisfaction with the interaction between the members of the Platform (n=14)

Interaction between the members of the Platform	
not at all	0.07
unsatisfied	0.21
medium	0.57
rather satisfied	0.14
very satisfied	0.00

Table 6: Satisfaction with the interaction between the members of the Platform in percentages (n=14)

In general, it is noted by the Platform members that the Platform should be more interactive. The Platform administrators have tried to enhance this interaction by using social media tools, through the creation of a LinkedIn group for instance. This tool allows for more rapid communication between the members and the administrators.

3.1.14   Website

As mentioned in the activity report of 2 September 2013, the website[34] of the Platform was re-vamped to be more user-friendly. This objective was achieved by the logical division of sub-sections and by elimination of repetitive content. In addition, a map was added, with an option of locating in a visual way the Platform members.[35]

The majority of the surveyed Platform members indicated their satisfaction with the usability of the website, as demonstrated in the graph below (see figure 8 and table 7).
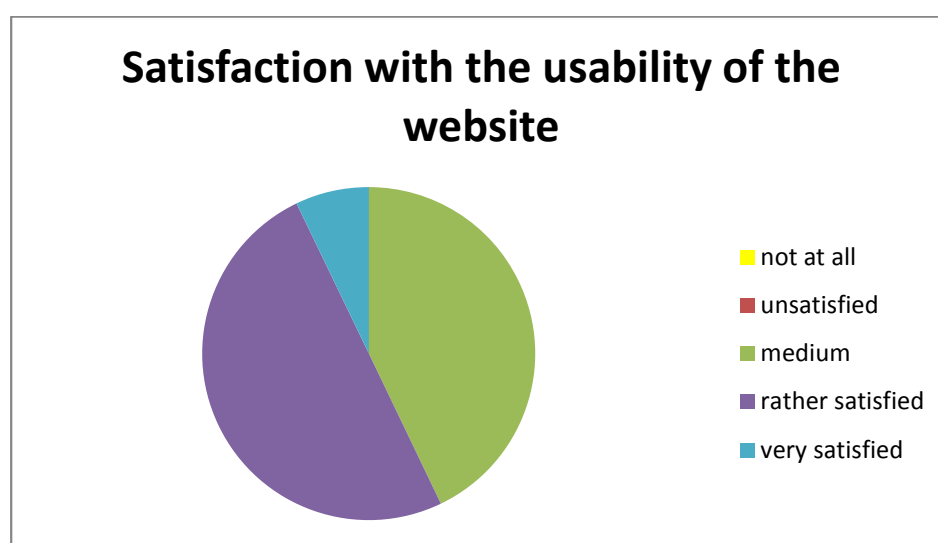
Figure 8: Satisfaction with the usability of the website (n=14)

Satisfaction with the usability of the website	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.00
medium	0.43
rather satisfied	0.50
very satisfied	0.07

Table 7: Satisfaction with the usability of the website in percentages (n=14)

Yet, certain members asked that the website should be more dynamic and updated more often.

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[34] http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020.
[35] The list of good practices is available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/MonitoringFlagships/Pages/Good-Practices.aspx (EN).

3.1.15 Translations

As demonstrated below (see figure 9 and table 8), one third of the Platform members that replied to the survey are rather unsatisfied or not at all satisfied with the translation system. However, an increase of the number of translations is hindered by budgetary reasons.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with the translations (n=14)

Satisfaction with the translations	
not at all	0.21
Unsatisfied	0.14
Medium	0.29
rather satisfied	0.07
very satisfied	0.29

Table 8: Satisfaction with the translations in percentages (n=14)

3.2   Findings on the EGTC Platform
3.2.1 Objectives – mission and intervention logic of the Platform

Since 2006, the EGTC legislation enables public entities from different Member States to come together and create a new body with legal personality under

European law.[36] The main objective of the EGTC is to foster cooperation with a view to strengthen the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the EU.[37] The CoR runs the official register of EGTCs.

The Platform of EGTC was launched in 2011 with following missions:

a) 'Monitoring the adoption and implementation of the EGTC provisions at EU and national level;

b) Facilitating the exchange of experiences on the establishment of EGTCs at territorial level and sharing knowledge of best practices in the field;

c) Promoting the EGTC as a tool for territorial cohesion and give visibility to the existing EGTCs, notably among the EU Institutions, the national and sub-national administrations;

d) Improving communication on EGTC opportunities and challenges at territorial level;

e) Identifying the potential use of EGTC as a tool for cohesive territorial development;

f) Supporting the consultative works of the CoR by providing factual information about multilevel governance and cross-border aspects of the EU legislation and policies.'[38]

The Platform on EGTC gathers all the EGTCs as well as aspiring members, associations, cross-border programmes and experts. It is consequently larger and wider than the EGTC community. This is due to the mission of the Platform, which is to support the consultative works of the CoR by providing factual information about multilevel governance and cross-border aspects of the EU legislation and policies. This mission exceeds regional policies and includes for example also social legislation, rural development that might form an issue at the cross-border level. Cross-border cooperation is an area in which the CoR has a consultative remit, as stated in Article 307 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). As mentioned in the CoR Bureau

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[36] CoR, The EGTC: delivering growth and opportunities, available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Pages/Publication%27TheEGTC%E2%80%93Deliveringgrowthandopportunities%27availableonline.aspx (EN).
[37] The Regulation (EU) 1302/2013 amending Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 on the EGTC was adopted on 17 December 2013 and will enter into force on 22 June 2014. These amendments will simplify procedures and enlarge the scope of entities eligible to be members of an EGTC, providing the elements to make the functioning of the EGTCs easier in line with the suggestions made by the CoR.
[38] CoR Bureau Decision of 26 January 2011, item 6, CdR 397/2010.

Decision of 2 May 2012, the CoR will 'intensify the cross-border dimension of EU policies in its consultative work. In view of this objective, the EGTC Platform will be the main instrument for obtaining factual information about cross-border aspects of EU policies.'[39]

It should also be noted that in the case of the EGTCs, cross-border cooperation refers to a geographical vicinity – whether an area is close to a border.

3.2.2 Functioning of the platform in general

The Platform functions well. All surveyed members (50 responses) were at least medium satisfied (see figure 11 and table 9). Moreover, 68% of the members were rather satisfied, and 20% of the members very satisfied. Hence, it is clear that regarding the function of the Platform, the overall very positive rating means that the members are very happy with the functioning of the Platform.
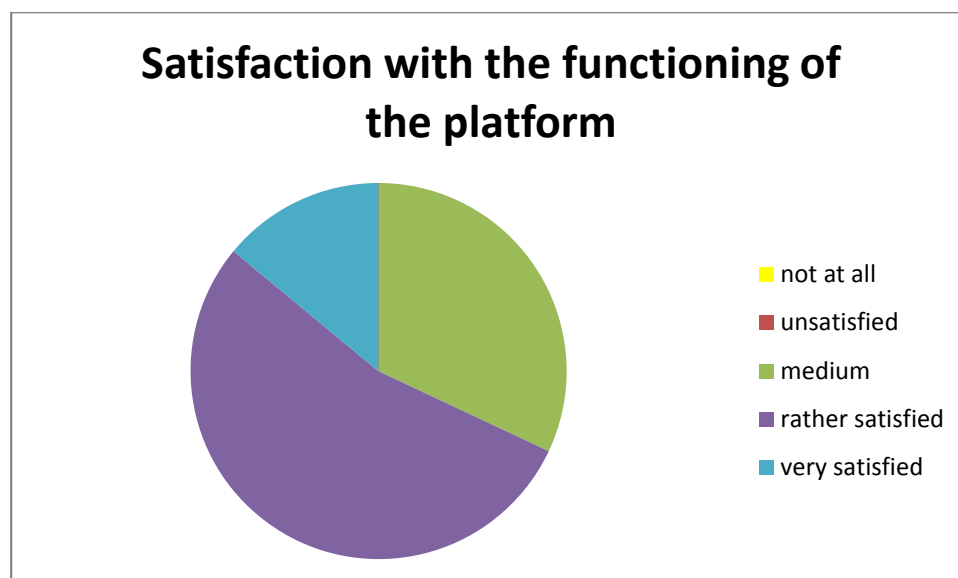
Figure 11: Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform (n=50)

Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.00
medium	0.32
rather satisfied	0.54
very satisfied	0.14

Table 9: Satisfaction with the functioning of the Platform in percentages (n=50)

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[39] CoR Bureau Decision of 2 May 2012, R/CdR 606/2012 item 8) EN/o-FR/DS/nm.

3.2.3 Structure

There are 51 EGTCs originating from 19 EU Member States gathering about 750 national, regional and local authorities.[40] The different EGTCs have a differing structure, and have differing amounts of employees as well as differing funds.

Moreover, there are rather large differences in coverage of EGTCs over the different EU Member States. Whereas some Member States do not have a single EGTC, others, such as France, Spain, Hungary and Czech Republic have several.

Although created by the CoR, non-CoR members can join the Platform as well. The Platform of EGTCs is administrated by a single Administrator at the CoR, backed by another Administrator and one Assistant.

3.2.4 Governance

In relation to governance, the CoR Bureau decision constituting the Platform reads as follows:

a) 'The existing EGTC and the active members of the Expert Group will be automatically entitled to be partners of the Platform. The CoR will invite the EGTCs under constitution, and targeted experts and stakeholders (like INTERACT and associations).

b) The Chairman of the Commission COTER will act as political co-ordinator of the EGTC Platform and will report regularly to the Commission COTER and to the Bureau.

c) The ordinary administration of the EGTC Platform will be run by the CoR.'[41]

The CoR plays a supporting role to the Platform as the Platform itself is self-standing. The Platform only has a political coordinator, and has no Steering Committee. The political coordinator is responsible for all EGTC actions and informs the Bureau. The CoR administrator supports his work, the functioning

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[40] EGTC Monitoring Report 2013: Towards the New Cohesion Policy, available at: http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/EGTC-monitoring-report-2013/EGTC-monitoring-report-2013.pdf (EN).

[41] Bureau Decision of 26 January 2011, item 6, ref.: CdR 397/2010.

of the Platform and prepares reports. The political groups are also involved as they look into the reports and submit their comments on these reports.

In terms of governance, the establishment of an Interregional group of EGTC has been discussed (it was proposed by a Platform member), which could become the *de facto* steering group. In accordance with Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the CoR, 'Members and alternates may form interregional groups. They shall inform the Committee President thereof. An interregional group shall be duly formed by decision of the Bureau.' For example, members with an affinity with a certain topic could then create an interregional group on crossborder cooperation (currently 10). The creation of thematic subgroups has also been put forward by Platform participants as a useful addition.

3.2.5 Outputs and results

3.2.5.1 Events

The EGTC Platform organized several meeting and events.

First of all, there is an annual meeting of the EGTC Platform. The last one took place on 18th of February 2014, and dealt in more detail with "the EGTCs and the Europe 2020 Strategy".[42]

Moreover, during the last two years, the Platform has been involved with several other seminars:

- the CIVEX external meeting and seminar in Bozen/Bolzano in July 2013, organized by the CoR and hosted by the EGTC Europaregion Tirol-Trentino-Alto Adige. The focus of this meeting was on 'Multilevel governance in practice at local and regional level – Decentralized policy strategies in the European year of citizens';[43]

- the Open Days Workshop: 'The European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation: cross-border players in the Single Market', 9 October 2013. This workshop has been organized in cooperation with DG Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between the CoR and the European Commission;

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[42] See https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Pages/EGTCs-contributing-to-the-Europe-2020-growth-objectives.aspx (EN).

[43] http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/19th-meeting-civex.aspx (EN).

- on 18 November 2013, the EGTC Platform co-organized a seminar with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and in cooperation with the European Year of Citizens' Alliance with the title: 'The Participation of Citizens of Border Regions in the Operational Programmes: The Case of the EGTC'. This seminar intended to draw attention to the necessary participation of the border regions in Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes, in a moment in which these key instruments are in phase of preparation. The CoR and the AEBR communicated this concern to the European Commission, the Member States in the Council and the European Parliament. The seminar was a landmark in the cooperation with civil society, which might lead to future synergies;

- on 28 March 2014, the Platform was involved in the conference on 'The Hungarian – Romanian economic development in the Gate to Europe EGTC territories' held in the city of Satu Mare, Romania;

- on 26 June 2014, a workshop was organized on 'Implementing the new legislation on EGTC-Dialogue with national authorities'. This was in view of the revised EGTC legislation adopted in December 2013. The focus was on the dialogue between national authorities and stakeholders in implementing this new legislation (Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013).[44]

Other than these events, the CoR also addressed the potential of use of the EGTC in a plenary session in presence of the Director of the European Investment Bank. The cooperation with DG Enlargement has continued via the inclusion of the EGTC in most of the TAIEX-LAF workshops celebrated at the CoR.

Finally, the EGTC has been included in the programmes of the Joint Consultative Committees and of the Working Groups of the CoR with candidate and neighbor countries.

3.2.5.2 Annual monitoring report

The CoR issues a yearly monitoring report on EGTCs.[45] This report provides readers with in-depth information regarding the different EGTCs and reviews

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[44] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Pages/Registrations-open-26-June,-workshop-'Implementing-the-new-legislation-on-EGTC---Dialogue-with-the-national-authorities'--.aspx (EN) and https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Pages/Dialogue-with-national-authorities-The-EGTCs-demand-participation-to-implement-the-revised-Regulation-.aspx (EN).

[45] In line with Regulation (EC)1082/2006, see http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/networks/Documents/EN.pdf (EN).

the activities of the EGTCs of the last year. It also provides other CoR units and interested people with a complete picture of the work and contact information of the different EGTCs. It yearly presents analyzes of the latest developments and builds on the findings of earlier versions.

3.2.5.3 Consultations and other initiatives

The Platform has also been used to get information from its members. So far, two consultations have been undertaken.

In March 2014, a questionnaire on cross-border cooperation was submitted for consultation of the EGTC Platform on the theme 'Towards an Urban Agenda of the EU' in view of to provide information for a CoR own-initiative Draft Opinion calling upon the European Commission to draw up a White Paper on an integrated urban agenda.[46]

The second consultation targeted the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region in March 2014.[47] A questionnaire on cross-border cooperation was submitted for consultation of the EGTC Platform. This consultation was conducted in view to provide information for a CoR Draft Opinion on 'EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.'

In addition to these consultations, it should be noted that the CoR has conducted a consultation on 'The review of the EGTC Regulation (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation)'.[48] This consultation was conducted in 2010 before the establishment of the EGTC Platform. It was a joint initiative of the CoR, the Trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU (Spain/Belgium/Hungary), the European Commission and the INTERACT programme. Its aim was to collect information in view of the review of the Regulation on EGTCs. The questionnaire attracted a significant interest since it received 91 responses.[49] Based on the results of this consultation, changes were suggested to the

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[46] For further information, see:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/pages/opinion-factsheet.aspx?OpinionNumber=CDR%206902/2013
(EN) and Opinion CDR 6902/2013, rapporteur Mr B. Verkerk (NL/ALDE).
[47] The questionnaire is available at:
https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCkQFjAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fportal.cor.europa.eu%2Fegtc%2FPlatform%2FDocuments%2FConsultations%2FEUSAIR%2520Questionnaire.doc&ei=-GHfVJbMCYv-Uo2kgLgP&usg=AFQjCNGWwfoTh9rLKoBqIzS_DzuaG_14VA&bvm=bv.85970519,d.d24 (EN).
[48] The questionnaire is available at
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Documents/consultation/EGTC%20joint%20consultation%20questionnaire%20EN.doc (EN).
[49] The Conclusions of the Committee of the Regions about the Joint Consultation on The Review of Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation are available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/Archived/Documents/366960dd-3c03-4efa-9230-665455fa6bb5.pdf (EN).

Regulation in a CoR own-initiative Opinion on 'The review of the EGTC Regulation' delivered in 2011.[50] The further developments related to this Regulation are discussed in a subsequent section presenting good practices.

The administrator at the CoR noted that the response rate to requests for information is generally higher when he personally sends the members a personal email that lays out why the questionnaire could be interesting to them. Personal contact seems to be very important in order to get the necessary information from the EGTCs.

In addition, there has been made ample use of social networks (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn). The EGTC community is in the end a rather small community, and the Platform members generally know each other very well. Social networks could then help to increase short discussions and information sharing among the EGTCs. However, it has also been noted that the social network initiatives so far might not have been able to fully realize their potential.

The consultations that have been conducted have been open to everyone but in order to participate, it is necessary to either be a registered contact and receive the email invitation or to visit the website. Invitations for participation have been mailed out to experts and registered contacts. The Platform currently has a vast database of about 300-400 people.

Moreover, the EGTC Platform has deepened its cooperation with target associations and entities that support cooperation: the CoR contributed to a publication of the INTERACT Programme about the EGTC, cooperated and disseminated the capitalization workshops of the Programme Interreg IVc, organized a joint seminar with the Association of European Border Regions, and coordinated its Open Days workshops related to the Single Market with the *Mission Operationnelle Transfrontalière*. The EGTC Platform also worked with the Central European Service for Cross-Border Activities and with the Assembly of European Regions. The CoR also cooperated with the Hungarian government's initiative to coordinate the national authorities in charge of implementing the EGTC Regulation. Regular contacts took place with the mentioned associations and other national authorities.

The CoR launched in October 2013 a bi-annual European award named 'Building Europe Across Borders' to recognize and give visibility to the best practice of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) related to the creation of growth and jobs in Europe (Europe 2020 Strategy). The first

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[50] CDR 100/2010, rapporteur Mr A. Nuñez Feijoo (EPP/ES).

edition of this award was delivered in February 2014 during the fourth annual meeting of the Platform. The winner was the EGTC *Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean*[51] for its project Creamed - Business Incubators network .[52]

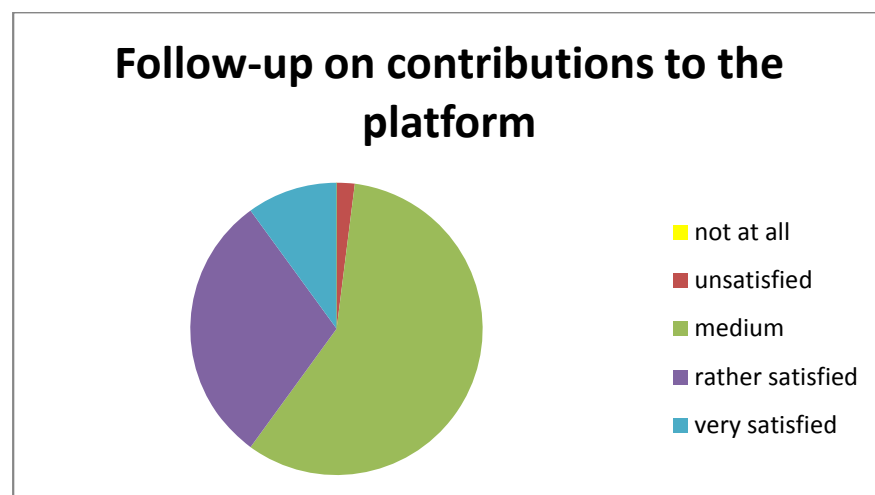### 3.2.5.4 Follow-up on registered contacts' input

Follow-up on contributions to the platform

- not at all
- unsatisfied
- medium
- rather satisfied
- very satisfied

Figure 12: Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions to the Platform (n= 50)

Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions	
not at all	0.00
Unsatisfied	0.02
Medium	0.58
rather satisfied	0.30
very satisfied	0.10

Table 10: Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions in percentages (n=50)

The Platform contacts have signaled their overall satisfaction with the follow-up on their contributions to the Platform. Only 1 surveyed contact declared to be unsatisfied with the follow-up on its contributions, whereas 40% was even more than medium satisfied (see figure 12 and table 10).

3.2.6 Relevance: value added and usefulness

As mentioned on the CoR website, the EGTCs, and the Platform, can help in realizing the following CoR and EU objectives:

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[51] http://www.euroregio.eu/ (EN).
[52] http://www.eurocreamed.eu/creamed/fr/index.html (FR) and https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/news/Pages/The-EGTC-award-goes-to-Euroregion-Pyrinees-Mediterranean.aspx (EN).

- 'Territorial cohesion: EGTCs and the Platform can help to achieve the objectives of the EU as stated in the Treaty of Lisbon'.[53] This statement shall be read in the context of the objectives of the Platform as described in point 3.2.1. Cross-border cooperation is an area in which the CoR has a consultative remit, as stated in Article 307 TFEU and the CoR will 'intensify the cross-border dimension of EU policies in its consultative work. In view of this objective, the EGTC Platform will be the main instrument for obtaining factual information about cross-border aspects of EU policies.'[54]

- Europe 2020: EGTCs and the Platform can be tools to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy, boosting competitiveness and sustainability in Europe's regions.[55]

- Multilevel governance: the EGTC offers 'the possibility of involving different institutional levels in a single cooperative structure', and thus 'opens up the prospect of new forms of multilevel governance, enabling European regional and local authorities to become driving forces in drawing up and implementing EU policy, helping to make European governance more open, participatory, democratic, accountable and transparent.'[56]

The EGTC Platform is in a moving process, continuously seeking to ameliorate itself. There is a lot of information provided by the Platform. However, this information is often given by the same registered contacts. Hence, there is a problem from the political perspective to integrate the views in the Opinion if only a few registered contacts express themselves.

Important to note is that the CoR runs the register for EGTCs. EGTCs have to notify the CoR of their creation. The fact that the CoR provides the first door for the EGTCs also makes the Platform important and useful.

3.2.7 Expert groups

An Expert Group was set up in 2007 prior to the establishment of the EGTC Platform. Pursuant to the CoR Bureau decision constituting the EGTC Platform of 26 January 2011, 'the active members of the Expert Group will be

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[53] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/discovertheegtc/Pages/welcome.aspx (EN).
[54] CoR Bureau Decision of 2 May 2012, R/CdR 606/2012 item 8) EN/o-FR/DS/nm.
[55] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/discovertheegtc/Pages/welcome.aspx (EN).
[56] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/discovertheegtc/Pages/welcome.aspx (EN).

automatically entitled to be partners of the Platform.'[57] Hence, the Expert Group was integrated in the Platform.

3.2.8 Members

According to the CoR Bureau decision constituting the Platform, it 'will include the political and technical representatives of all the existing EGTC and EGTCs under constitution, members of the Expert Group, associations and other stakeholders.'[58]

The membership of the Platform and the number of EGTCs are slowly growing. However, the EGTCs are not evenly spread, with a significant presence from more Eastern and Southern registered contacts.

Over the last years, the total number of EGTCs has remained rather small, but is steadily growing. This might be caused by the rather slow national implementation in particular in federalized countries.[59] The main reason for setting up an EGTC is to work together with geographical neighbors to build an institutional framework for cooperation on projects of common interest that transcend legally defined national borders.[60]
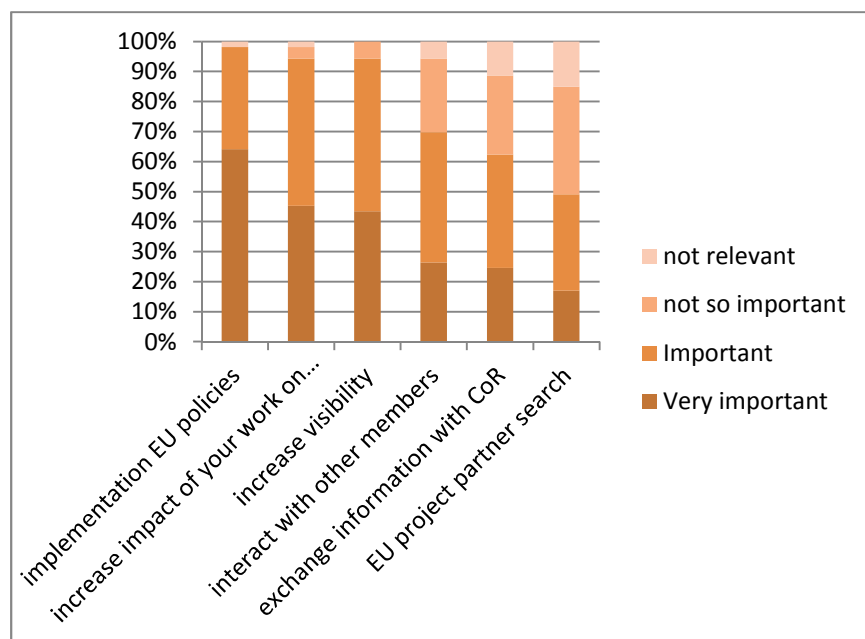
Figure 13: Reasons for joining the Platform (n=53)

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[57] CoR Bureau Decision of 26 January 2011, item 6, CdR 397/2010.
[58] Bureau Decision of 26 January 2011, item 6, ref.: CdR 397/2010.
[59] EGTC Monitoring Report 2012, available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/EGTC_monitoring_report_2012/EGTC_Monitoring_Report_2012.pdf (EN), p. 1.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The registered contacts of the EGTC Platform were surveyed (getting 53 useful reactions) about the reasons why they joined the Platform (see figure 13). Most importantly, the Platform members joined in order to address the challenges in the implementation of EU policies, to increase the impact of their work on the CoR, and to increase visibility. Slightly less deemed important reasons include the interactions with other members, and the exchange of information with the CoR. EU project partner search was not rated very important.

The 2012 monitoring report of the EGTC argued that the main reason for establishing an EGTC was to work with geographical neighbors to build an institutional framework for cooperation on projects of common interest that transcend legally defined borders. This might but does not need to be related to geographical distance, as for example the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) EGTC's members which do not share a border. In the same report, it has been put forward that the main precondition for establishing a grouping is the availability of funds. Within Europe, there are important differences in terms of financial endowment of EGTCs. This also explains the differences in people employed by the EGTCs.[61]

3.2.9 Good practices

Probably the best example of good practices involving the EGTC is provided by the discussions on the revisions of the regulation on EGTCs. During these discussions, an own-initiative Opinion on 'The review of the EGTC Regulation'[62] was issued in 2011 in which the CoR made a number of recommendations to the European Commission. This Opinion integrated the results of a consultation launched as a joint initiative of the CoR, the Trio of Presidencies of the Council of the EU (Spain/Belgium/Hungary), the European Commission and the INTERACT programme. The consultation notably showed common issues concerning *inter alia* the employment of staff working in the EGTCs or borders with non EU Member States.[63]

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[61] EGTC Monitoring Report 2012, p.5, available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/EGTC_monitoring_report_2012/EGTC_Monitoring_Report_2012.pdf (EN).
[62] CDR 100/2010 fin, rapporteur Mr A. Nuñez Feijoo (EPP/ES).
[63] The Conclusions of the Committee of the Regions about the Joint Consultation on The Review of Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation are available at http://cor.europa.eu/en/Archived/Documents/366960dd-3c03-4efa-9230-665455fa6bb5.pdf (EN).

The European Commission submitted a revised proposal which has taken into account many of the recommendations made by the CoR.[64] Following this new proposal, changes were suggested by a new CoR Opinion delivered in 2012.[65] Driven by the CoR Opinions, the CoR was invited to the three meetings held between the European Parliament, the Commission and the Council to negotiate the revision of the EGTC Regulation, following the 'trilogue' procedure foreseen in Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament. Thanks to this active involvement, the Regulation (EU) 1302/2013 amending the EGTC legal framework, which has been the outcome of the negotiation, incorporated and reflected most of the interests of the EGTCs and LRAs represented by the CoR. Consequently, the CoR was able to increase its profile as pole of expertise towards the EU institutions. As noted by numerous interviewees, this was the first time that 100% of a CoR Opinion had been followed by another EU institution.

Another simple but much heralded reform has been the change from long very encompassing emails to very short mails with the topic in the subject line. This allows the registered contacts to more quickly identify the emails that interest them.

3.2.10 Visibility

The Platform is very visible for people working on cross-border EU legislation. This might be related to the fact that the CoR runs the register of EGTCs.

The Platform is also very visible within the CoR itself. For example the EGTC hashtag featured very heavily on the previous Open Days. Also, the conferences and seminars are heavily attended. Yet, the Platform is still rather unknown to the general public. The CoR continuously strives to increase its visibility towards politicians and professionals. However, even if some of the Platform members have press offices, it is difficult increase the visibility of the EGTC Platform.

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[64] These recommendations relate both to an earlier CoR Opinion CdR 308/2007 fin and the Opinion CdR 100/2010 fin.

[65] Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Revision of the EGTC Regulation, 15-16 February 2012, COTER-V-022.
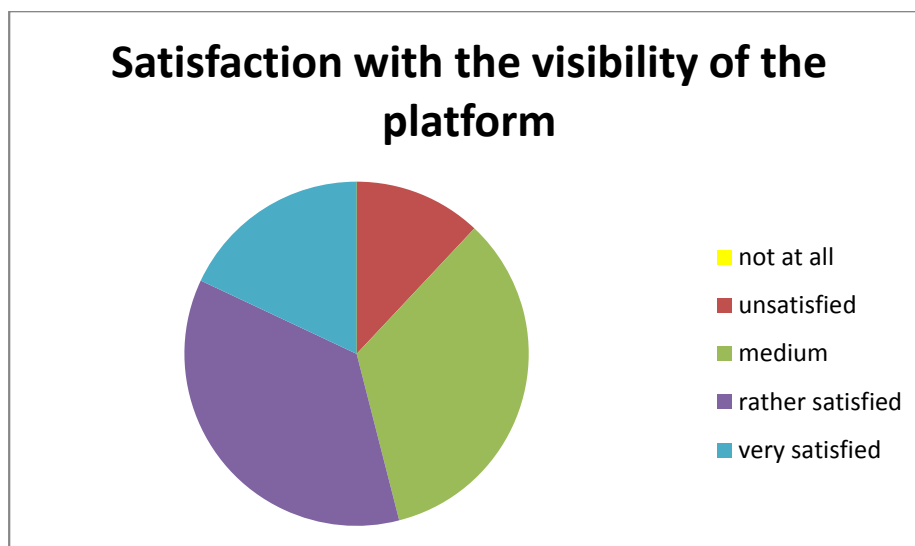
Figure 14: Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform (n=50)

Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.12
medium	0.34
rather satisfied	0.36
very satisfied	0.18

Table 11: Satisfaction with the visibility of the Platform in percentages (n=50)

Most registered contacts are satisfied with the visibility of the Platform. Only 12% have declared that they feel the Platform should be more visible. Contrary, 56% indicated to be at least rather satisfied (see figure 14 and table 11).

3.2.11   Timing

Timing is one of the biggest issues for the Platform on EGTC. In order to be able to inform and support the workings of the CoR, the Platform's registered contacts should be contacted early on and be informed about possible proposals to which they can contribute. This proves to be a difficult undertaking.

In order for the Platform to contribute, it is first imperative that the working plan of the CoR is taken into account. This allows to identify interest fields to which the Platform could make a contribution. After identifying the interest fields, the type of interaction with the registered contacts should be decided upon. There can be a seminar, a consultation, or just a short note.

However, this whole process takes a lot of time and is not perfectly aligned with the working of the EU institutions.

3.2.12   Impact on the political work of CoR

Art. 307 TFEU states that the CoR shall be consulted in cases concerning cross-border cooperation. Hence, the Platform and the EGTCs are important to support the CoR itself.

The administrator has argued that, presumably related to the Art. 307 TFEU which calls upon the CoR for cross-border provisions, the Platform has become a poster child for the CoR. It might even be over-rated in terms of its impact on the visibility of the CoR, whereas its impact in terms of Opinions remains rather limited.

EGTCs have been subject to three Opinions adopted by the CoR so far. In addition to the two Opinions previously discussed relating to the discussions on the EGTC Regulation – CdR 100/2010 and CdR 371/2011 – a prior Opinion was adopted on 18 April 2008 on the 'European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC): new impetus for territorial cooperation in Europe'.[66] Given that the concept of EGTCs has only been created in 2006, one may consider that this constitutes a rather high number of Opinions. The two first Opinions were adopted prior to the creation of the EGTC Platform. In Opinion CdR 371/2011, the rapporteur Mr M. Delebarre (FR/EPP) suggests that 'work must be continued on the CoR's EGTC Platform […] so that EGTCs can be monitored and exchanges can take place concerning best practices and the challenges that both existing EGTCs and those being set up have to face and so that greater use can be made of the EGTC in the EU's sectoral policies; suggests that the EGTC Platform should, as of 2014, be given a role similar to that of the urban development Platform proposed by the Commission in its proposal for a regulation on the European Regional Development Fund'. These suggestions will be further developed in chapter 3.6 of this study.

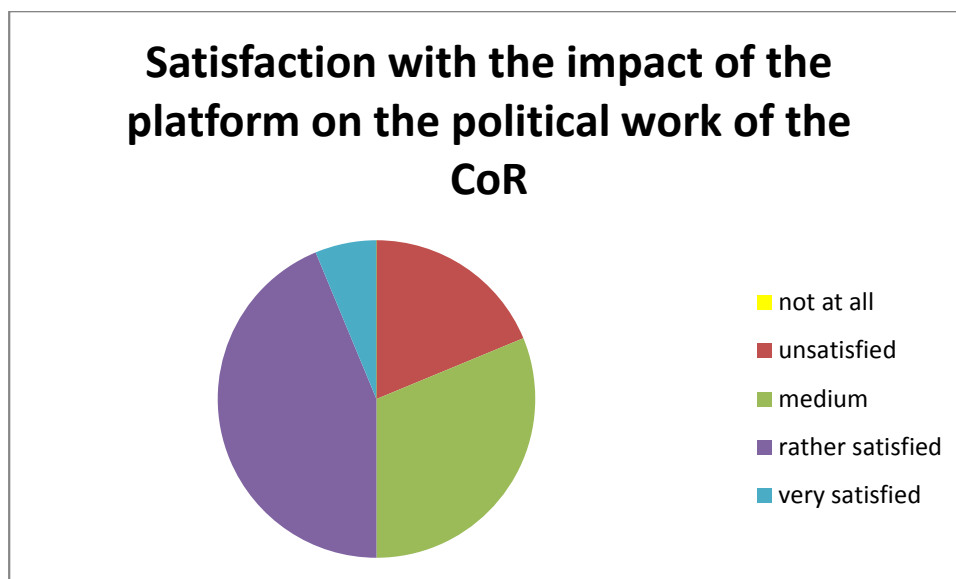[66] CdR 308/2007 fin, rapporteur Ms M. Bresso (IT/PES).

Figure 15: Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR (n=48)

Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.19
medium	0.31
rather satisfied	0.44
very satisfied	0.06

Table 12: Satisfaction with the impact of the Platform on the political work of the CoR in percentages (n=48)

The surveyed registered contacts were generally rather pleased with the impact of the Platform on the work of the COR. About half of them were at least rather satisfied. Still, about 20% indicated to be unsatisfied (see figure 15 and table 12).

3.2.13   Networking capacity

The networking capacity between the members has been rated rather positively (see figure 16 and table 13). We observe one registered contact who is not at all satisfied with the interaction. That member indicated that the Platform is too little of a real forum than a participative social network with a professional profile for every user. The CoR has indeed already tried to make the Platform more social network-oriented, but the administrator also indicated that the Platform is not yet the forum the CoR would like it to be.
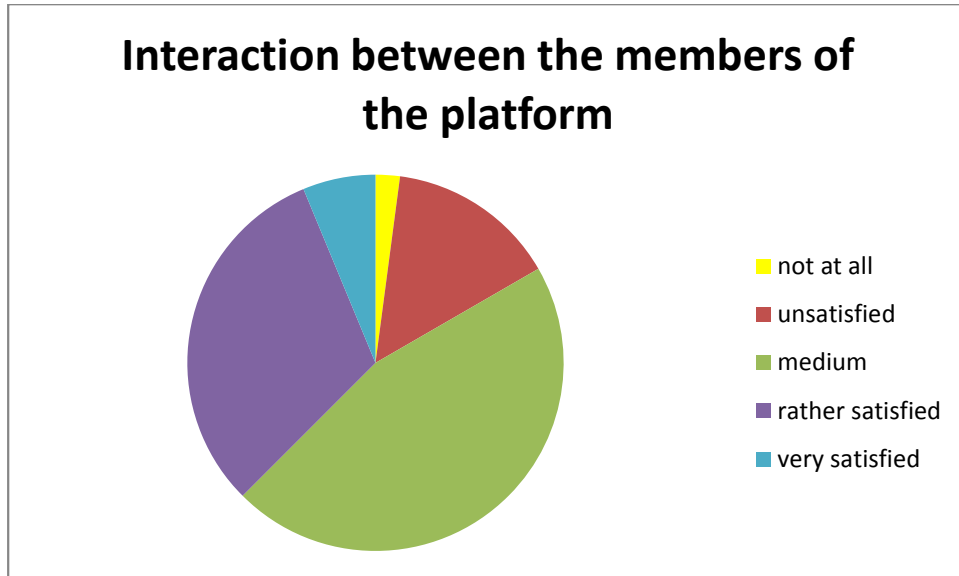
Figure 16: Interaction between the members of the Platform (n=48)

Satisfaction with the interaction between the Platform members	
not at all	0.02
unsatisfied	0.15
medium	0.46
rather satisfied	0.31
very satisfied	0.06

Table 13: Interaction between the members of the Platform in percentages (n=48)
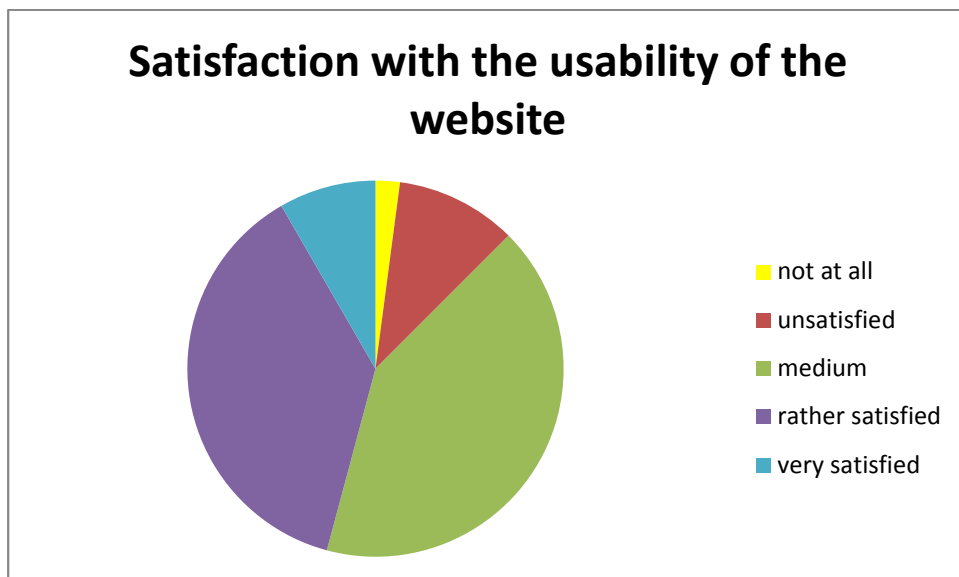
3.2.14 Website

Figure 18: Satisfaction with the usability of the website (n=48)

Satisfaction with the usability of the website	
not at all	0.02
unsatisfied	0.10
medium	0.42
rather satisfied	0.38
very satisfied	0.08

Table 15: Satisfaction with the usability of the website in percentages (n=48)

The website has been rated rather usable by the surveyed members (see figure 18 and table 15). Even though some members indicated to be not satisfied at all or not completely satisfied. The two contacts that were not at all satisfied indicated that there needed to be clearer links towards the Platform on the EGTC and CoR website, and that the website's interface could be made more user-friendly, intuitive and attractive. It has been indicated that the website of the Platform should be more visible on the CoR website, and more frequently updated.

3.2.15 Translations
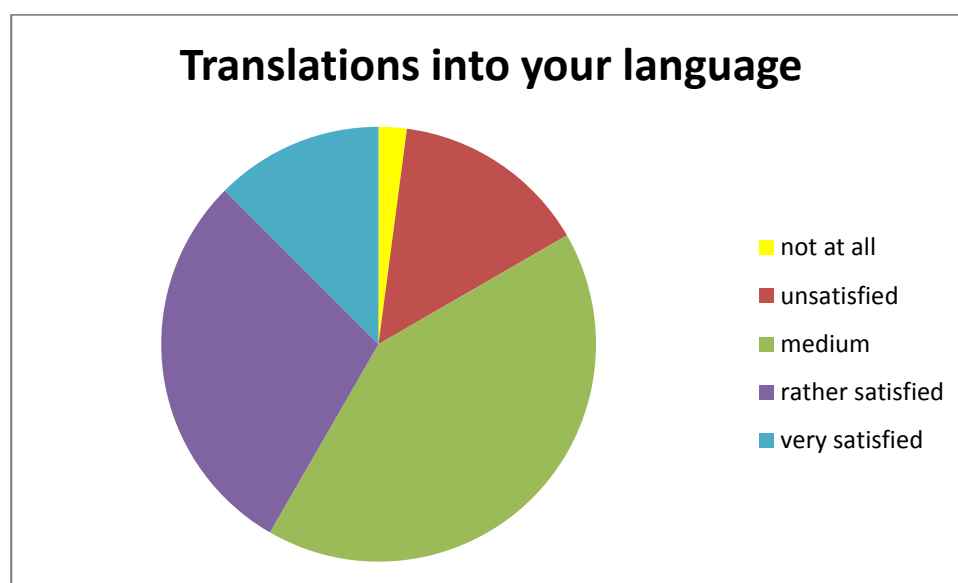
Figure 17: Satisfaction with the translations (n=48)

Satisfaction with the translations	
not at all	0.02
Unsatisfied	0.15
Medium	0.42
rather satisfied	0.29
very satisfied	0.13

Table 14: Satisfaction with the translations in percentages (n=48)

Regarding the translations, it is clear that this can be considered a more important working point (see figure 17 and table 14). In this case, less than 50% of the surveyed registered contacts indicated to be rather satisfied. Even though the general feeling is still rather positive, translations into more languages could be considered an important reform.

3.3   Findings of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network

3.3.1 Objectives – mission and intervention logic of the network

The principle of subsidiarity ensures that legislative decisions are taken at the level as closely as possible to EU citizens. In particular, the principle holds that, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the EU shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at the central level or at the regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at the Union level (Article 5§3 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU)).

Regular controls are needed to verify whether, in each given case, legislative action at the EU level is effectively justified. This monitoring process requires a high degree of expertise and an analysis of the underlying political/economic rationale for EU draft legislation. Subsidiarity is mainly investigated at national and regional levels. Indeed, the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1st December 2009 and the amended Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality have opened the door for closer involvement of regional parliaments with legislative powers in the subsidiarity monitoring process. In the context of the Early Warning System, Article 6 of the Protocol explicitly states that 'it is for each national Parliament or each chamber of a national parliament to consult, where appropriate, regional parliaments with legislative powers.'

At the European level, the CoR has progressively been vested with enhanced responsibilities in the field of subsidiarity monitoring.[67] The CoR notably aims

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[67] For further information, see P. Schmitt, T. Ruys & A. Marx, 'Political participation, representation and the subsidiarity principle. The case of national and sub-national regional parliaments in the European Union after Lisbon', in R. Cordenillo & K. Gardes (eds.), *Inclusive Political Participation and Representation: The Role of Regional Organizations*, Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2013, pp. 161-189; E. Domorenok, 'The Committee of the Regions: In search of Identity', *Regional & Federal Studies* 19(1), 2009, pp. 143-164; C. Jeffery, 'Social and Regional Interests: ESC and Committee of the Regions', in J. Peterson & M. Shackleton (eds.), *The Institutions of the European Union* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 2002) pp. 326-346.

to link up the LRAs in their endeavour and to assemble the monitoring process at the European level, in view to integrate these regional reflections on subsidiarity in its Opinions. As noted in the Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions adopted by the Bureau in May 2012, '[m]onitoring and ensuring compliance of EU proposals with the subsidiarity principle remain one of the main political endeavours and institutional commitments of the CoR after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.'[68]

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the CoR has been empowered to institute an action for annulment against a specific EU legislative instrument on account of an alleged violation of the subsidiarity principle.[69] Moreover, the CoR has adapted its internal rules on several occasions in order to efficiently fulfil its new tasks. As from 2010, the CoR has modified its Rules of Procedure in order to include an explicit reference to the subsidiarity and proportionality principles in all its Opinions.[70] Subsequent changes were brought to the Rules of Procedure[71] notably to develop the CoR's subsidiarity monitoring system, including the SMN, along the lines adopted by the Bureau on 2 May 2012.[72] Moreover, Rule 55, paragraph 2 introduced some changes regarding the reference to subsidiarity and proportionality in CoR Opinions as follows: 'Committee opinions on proposals for legislative acts in areas not falling within the Union's exclusive field of competence shall express a view on the proposal's compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Other Committee opinions may refer, if necessary, to the application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles whenever appropriate.'

The SMN was launched in April 2007 with aim at:

1. 'permitting a political participation of local and regional authorities in monitoring of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles' implementation;

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[68] Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.

[69] Article 8 of the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. See also K. Lenaerts and N. Cambien, 'Regions and the European Court: giving shape to the regional dimension of the Member States', 35(5) *European Law Review*, 2010, pp. 609-635; S. Piattoni, 'The Committee of the Regions and the Upgrading of Subnational Territorial Representation', in S. Kröger and F. Dawid (eds.), *The Challenge of Democratic Representation in the European Union* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan 2012) pp. 59-73; O. Porchia, 'I ricorsi davanti alla Corte di giustizia dell'Unione europea: le modifiche previste dal Trattato di Lisbona', in P. Bilancia and M. D'Amico (eds.), *La nuova Europa dopo il Trattato di Lisbona* (Milan, Giuffrè 2009) pp. 223-232.

[70] Rule 51, paragraph 2 of the CoR Rules of Procedure, Official Journal L 6, 9 January 2010, p. 14.

[71] The current Rules of Procedure of the CoR are available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/Documents/Rules-of-Procedure-of-the-Committee-of-the-Regions/EN.pdf (EN).

[72] Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.

2. increasing awareness of the practical application of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles;

3. keeping CoR rapporteurs and members abreast of subsidiarity and proportionality related input stemming from a representative Network of local and regional actors;

4. identifying measures for better law-making, cutting red tape and increasing the acceptance by citizens of EU policies.'[73]

The SMN supports all CoR subsidiarity monitoring activities in order to provide CoR rapporteurs and members with quality input from a representative network of local and regional stakeholders on subsidiarity, so that these proper subsidiarity assessments can be included in CoR Opinions.[74]

From the perspective of its partners, the SMN enables the LRAs to be active in the subsidiarity monitoring process at all stages of EU policy-making. Moreover, it seeks to raise awareness of its partners to all subsidiarity-related issues.[75]

Finally, the SMN also aims to identify measures for better law-making and aims to increase the acceptance of EU policies by its citizens.

Within the SMN, the CoR has created a subnetwork on 'Regional Parliamentary Exchange' (REGPEX) aimed at supporting the subsidiarity analyses of regions with legislative powers during the Early Warning phase and at facilitating the exchange of information between regional parliaments and governments throughout the EU with regard to subsidiarity.[76]

It follows from the interviews conducted for this study that the objectives of the SMN are clear and well-perceived. Nevertheless, it has been noted by several respondents that it might be difficult in certain cases to distinguish subsidiarity from proportionality, which entails a risk of confusion in the contributions to the SMN.

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[73] R/CdR 229/2008 pt 8 a). See also the website of the SMN, available at http://www.cor.europa.eu/smn (EN). The network was established on the basis of two opinions of the CoR: 'Better Lawmaking' (CdR 121/2005), rapporteur: Mr M. Delebarre (FR/PES) and 'Guidelines for the application and monitoring of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles' (CdR 220/2004), rapporteur: Mr P. Straub (DE/EPP).
[74] CoR, Subsidiarity Annual Report 2012, R/CdR 3141-2013, p. 4.
[75] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/thesmn/Pages/default.aspx (EN).
[76] http://extranet.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/regpex/Pages/default.aspx (EN).

On a particular note, one SMN partner suggested to change the name of the SMN and its central objective to 'better legislation'. Yet, in view of the authors of this study, it may be counter-argued that such enlargement of the scope of the SMN would undermine its efficiency as subsidiarity tool. Related to this specific feature, a respondent deplored that the SMN was mainly used as a means to store data of the work of regional and local actors and did not sufficiently produce its own analysis of subsidiarity issues.

3.3.2 Functioning of the network in general

Most surveyed partners have indicated to be rather satisfied with the functioning of the SMN, as shown in the graph below (see figure 20 and table 16).
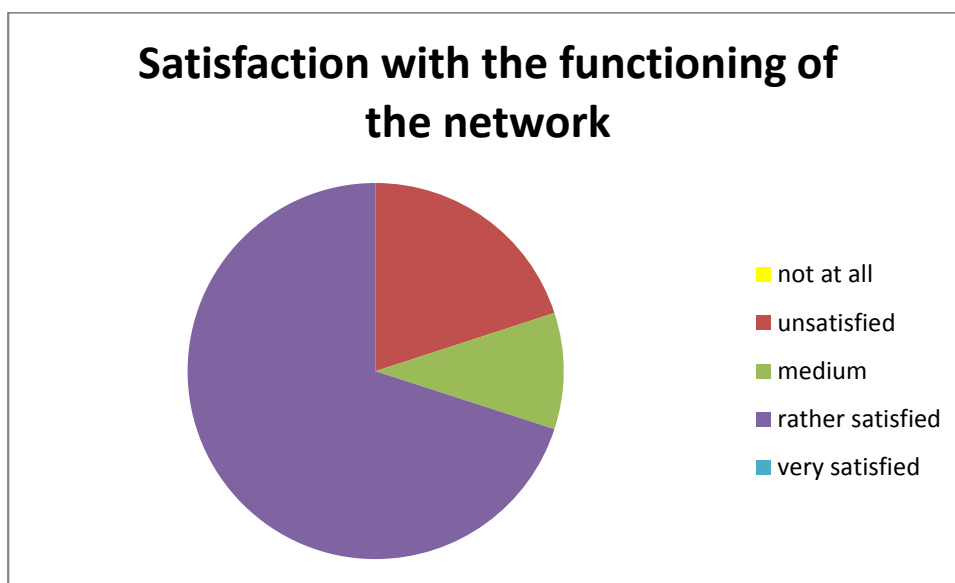

Figure 20: Satisfaction with the functioning of the network (n=10)

Satisfaction with the functioning of the network	
not at all	0.00
unsatisfied	0.20
medium	0.10
rather satisfied	0.70
very satisfied	0.00

Table 16: Satisfaction with the functioning of the network in percentages (n=10)

However, the interviews conducted for this study have shed light on a number of elements that could be improved in the functioning of the SMN.

In relation to its role in raising awareness regarding subsidiarity, it has been deplored that contributions mainly stem from a few active users such as the regional assemblies and parliaments in Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain. Given the technical and legal nature of the concept of subsidiarity, only

parliaments who are able and willing to invest resources in this process can actively participate.

A general satisfaction has been expressed as to the roles of the SMN to organize events and to keep CoR rapporteurs and SMN partners informed of subsidiarity issues.

Yet, the exchange of information between regional actors could be improved. A standard form for informing the CoR and the SMN partners is available on the website of the SMN/REGPEX but it is not used in practice. Instead, regional actors generally present their official documents in their original language, not adapted to standard tool. This complicates the further diffusion of the document among the partners of the SMN.

3.3.3 Structure

The SMN is supported by a Subsidiarity Team which is part of Unit E.2 – Subsidiarity Network / Europe2020 Monitoring Platform / Covenant of Mayors / EGTC within Directorate E – Horizontal Policies & Networks.

It follows from the interviews conducted for this study that the work of this Subsidiarity Team is generally well appreciated. The main concern with regard to this Team rests on the need for continuity, which may be threatened in case of too numerous movements of staff.

3.3.4 Governance

As mentioned in the new Strategy for the Committee of the Regions adopted by the CoR Bureau in May 2012, '[i]n order to ensure coordination between administrative activities in the field of subsidiarity monitoring and the political activity of the CoR, each political group shall be called to appoint a subsidiarity coordinator who, together with the political coordinator of the SMN, will constitute the Subsidiarity Steering Group.'[77] The Subsidiarity Steering Group 'ensures the proper coordination and political follow‑up of subsidiarity monitoring activities throughout the year. In particular, it is responsible for highlighting annual subsidiarity priorities and making proposals on the use of the most appropriate tools and procedures of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network in order to support the work of CoR rapporteurs in the legislative process.'[78]

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[77] Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.
[78] Footnotes omitted. For further information, see Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.

The Steering Group monitors the implementation of the Subsidiarity Annual Work Programme and the political role of the CoR with regard to the application of the subsidiarity principle in the EU decision-making process. Moreover, the Steering Group has to be informed of CoR Opinions on subsidiarity issues, on the main findings of consultations of the SMN and on the reasoned opinions issued by national parliaments – or subsidiarity analyses of regional parliaments.

It is important to note that according to the Bureau decision of 2 May 2012, '[s]pecial attention should also be given to regularly inform the relevant Commissions of the CoR about the findings and the progress of the Subsidiarity Work Programme in their specific fields in order to receive their feedback and to ensure a coherent and reactive process.' This constitutes an interesting feature of the governance of the SMN permitting to increase the visibility of the findings of the SMN and the coherence of the subsidiarity monitoring process.

The Subsidiarity Steering Group is chaired by the coordinator of the SMN. The Subsidiarity Steering Group gets input from the Subsidiarity Expert Group – a group of local and regional and local subsidiarity experts selected from the partners of the SMN for their expertise on subsidiarity and EU law – to establish a list of five priority initiatives to be monitored every year under the Subsidiarity Work Programme.[79]

It follows from the responses given both in the survey and in the interviews that the governance of the SMN through the Subsidiarity Steering Group is generally appreciated because the group is active and conducts an effective political governance over the subsidiarity monitoring.

3.3.5 Outputs and results

The SMN conducts four types of consultations on-line: targeted consultations; open consultations; consultations related to impact assessments and subsidiarity expert group consultations.

- Targeted consultations are launched by the Subsidiarity Steering Group. They may follow a standard grid[80] or tailored questionnaires. The SMN Secretariat draws up a summary on the basis of the partners'

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[79] In 2013, there were four initiatives included in the European Commission Work Programme 2013 (E-invoicing in the field of public procurement, a Blue Belt for a single market for maritime transport, the Review of Waste Policy and Legislation, and the Environmental climate and energy assessment framework to enable safe and secure unconventional hydrocarbon extraction) in addition to Urban Mobility. CoR, Subsidiarity Annual Report 2012, R/CdR 3141‑2013, p. 5.

[80] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/SiteCollectionDocuments/ExternalgridfinalClean2909.pdf (EN).

contributions and forwards this report to the rapporteur. The rapporteur may agree to publish the report on the SMN website and CoR TOAD portal.[81]

- Open consultations are spontaneous contributions of SMN partners on the compliance with subsidiarity and proportionality issues of EU draft legislation or non-legislative proposals. The SMN then acts as a channel to give publicity to subsidiarity analyses performed by the SMN partners.

- Consultations related to impact assessments: the European Commission has to carry out impact assessments of its future initiatives. The CoR provides direct access to quantitative and qualitative data from the field by circulating questionnaires among the SMN partners. These contributions constitute a valuable input from local and regional stakeholders to the work of the CoR and permits to these LRAs to express their views on EU draft legislation before the legislative process starts.[82]

- Subsidiarity expert group consultations:[83] given this group's relatively small size and expertise, it is assumed that such mechanism permits a quicker response than a consultation of the whole SMN, which generally runs for more than eight weeks. Yet, this assumption was contradicted in the case of the consultation of the Subsidiarity Expert Group on the own-initiative Opinion on 'Devolution in the European Union and the place for local and regional self-government in EU policy making and delivery' where only two experts replied to the consultation. Two other members of the Expert Group apologized for their failure to respond due to the tight deadline combined with the Christmas period, which did not allow for proper consultation within their regions. Conversely, the consultation attracted an interesting contribution from an SMN partner who is not member of the Subsidiarity Expert Group. This would tend to plead for a clear opening of consultations of the Expert Group to other interested SMN partners.[84]

Several people interviewed for this study have observed that the number of contributions to these consultations is in general rather low. Yet, despite their low quantity, their quality is generally appreciated. This being said, they often

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[81] A list of targeted consultations is available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/Targetedconsultations.aspx (EN).
[82] For further information, see https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/Pages/ImpactAssessmentPage.aspx (EN).
[83] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/SEG-Consultations.aspx (EN).
[84] Report on the consultation of the Subsidiarity Expert Group for the own-initiative opinion on "Devolution in the European Union and the place for local and regional self-government in EU policy making and delivery", rapporteur: Mr F. Schausberger (AT/EPP), 7 February 2013, available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Documents/SEGconsultation_Devolution_Report.docx (EN).

concern proportionality issues rather than subsidiarity issues. Certain partners of the SMN may be tempted to use this mechanism to be involved in the process in some way. They use the channel to complain about the fact that they are not involved. There is thus an amalgam between subsidiarity and multilevel governance. It is up to the SMN Secretariat to differentiate the information received from the partners of the SMN. Most importantly, it has to distinguish subsidiarity issues from proportionality issues and to filter the information.

In addition to its consultations, the SMN established a system of annual SMN Action Plans as a follow-up to the 4th Subsidiarity Conference held in Milan in May 2009. Its aim was to identify experiences and best practices in the application of subsidiarity among European regions and cities.[85] It complemented the activities of the SMN for a period of one year. This system does not exist anymore since the adoption of the Revised Strategy in 2012, where it was replaced by the system of Subsidiarity Work Programmes. These Subsidiarity Work Programmes identify EU initiatives of potential interest from a subsidiarity point of view in order to set a number of priorities calling for a specific monitoring of subsidiarity and proportionality.[86]

Thematic Subsidiarity Workshops (TSW) are also regularly organized. They involve network partners as well as selected working groups and discuss topics related to the priorities of the EU legislative agenda. They permit the subsidiarity debate to be directed towards more practical issues in policy making within specific areas.[87] For instance, as part of the 2014 Subsidiarity Work Programme, a workshop was organized on 11 June 2014 on the theme: Subsidiarity monitoring under scrutiny: More, less or different? This workshop was organized as a follow-up to the sixth Subsidiarity Conference held in Berlin in 2013 and involved key partners from the SMN, the Subsidiarity Steering Group and the Subsidiarity Expert Group as well as other relevant stakeholders, from EU institutions and national and regional parliaments, associations and academia.[88]

The CoR also organizes conferences on the theme of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity Conferences are organized biennially in order to strengthen the inter-institutional dynamic of subsidiarity scrutiny and allow genuine dialogue between the parties involved in the subsidiarity monitoring process. For instance, on 18 December 2013, the sixth Subsidiarity Conference was held in Berlin on the theme of 'Subsidiarity monitoring after Lisbon: experiences and

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[85] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/ActionsPlan.aspx (EN).
[86] Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.
[87] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/SubsidiarityWorkshops.aspx (EN).
[88] For further information, see https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Pages/Subsidiarity-monitoring-under-scrutiny.aspx (EN).

perspectives'.[89] Other conferences are also organized on the theme of subsidiarity, such as the international conference on 2 July 2014 on 'Strengthening regional parliaments in EU affairs: challenges, practices and perspectives'.[90] The respondents to the interviews indicated that these conferences were generally interesting and well-organized.

3.3.6 Relevance: value added and usefulness

The relevance of the SMN and its usefulness depend on the fact whether its consultations are taken into consideration or not by the CoR rapporteurs in their Opinions. Yet, even in the case where the contribution is not taken up in the Opinion, the evidence produced by the SMN may be extremely valuable for its partners in their own subsidiarity monitoring process, since this constitutes substantive and in-house evidence on subsidiarity, coming directly from the LRAs.

One SMN partner expressed concern about the fact that the rapporteur is not obliged to use the results from the SMN consultations. More importantly, the partner felt that if the rapporteur decides to neglect the argument from the SMN partners, the rapporteur should at least reply to the partner making the contribution and give arguments why this contribution is not taken on board. If a regional actor conducts a solid subsidiarity analysis, this regional actor can feel left out when the analysis is not taken up by the CoR. Moreover, the SMN partner felt that the procedures could be streamlined, as right now it looks rather arbitrary when the SMN is chosen to be involved or not.

This position raises an interesting issue. The fact that the rapporteur is not obliged to use any results stemming from SMN consultations may generate a certain degree of frustration. However, one should keep in mind that the concept of subsidiarity involves political and legal aspects and that it cannot be interpreted in an uniform manner.[91] Hence, a certain degree of flexibility should be preserved in the work of the rapporteur. To argue that the procedures should be streamlined and that a justification should be given as the decision to taken into consideration a contribution or not would, in view of the authors of this study, run counter this required flexibility in the conduct of the subsidiarity monitoring process.

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[89] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Pages/Subsidiarity-Conference.aspx (EN).
[90] For further information, see https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Pages/Strengthening-regional-parliaments.aspx (EN).
[91] This constitutes one of the conclusions of a workshop organized on 11 June 2014 at the CoR on the theme: Subsidiarity monitoring under scrutiny: More, less or different?

SMN partners are in general medium satisfied with the follow-up of the contributions on the network, as demonstrated by the graph below.
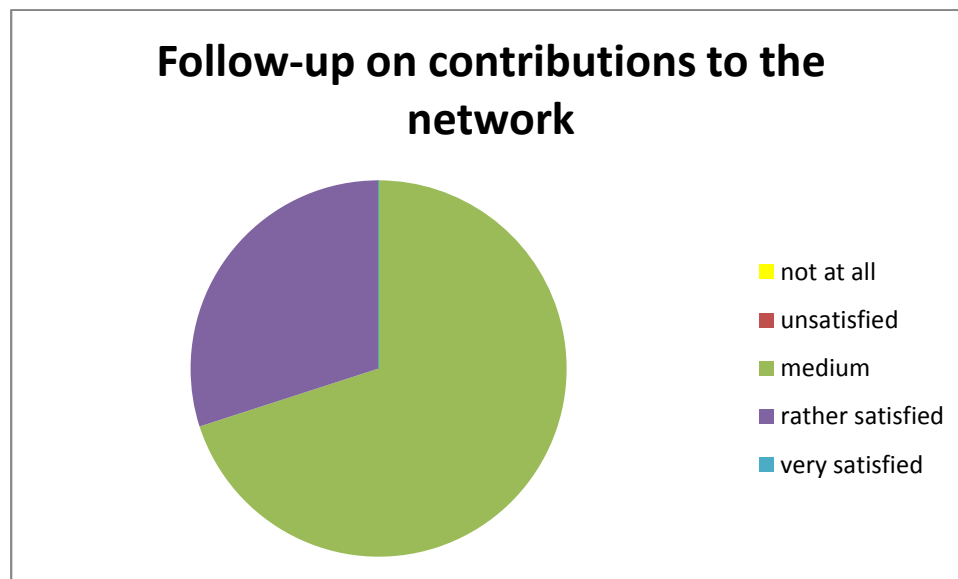

Figure 21: Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions to the network (n=10)

Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions	
not at all	0
Unsatisfied	0
Medium	0.7
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0

Table 17: Satisfaction with the follow-up on contributions in percentages (n=10)

3.3.7 Expert groups

The Subsidiarity Expert Group is a group composed of officials from SMN partner institutions that are national, regional or local subsidiarity experts. It selects EU proposals of interest from a subsidiarity perspective. Moreover, it may help SMN partners to express their positions on subsidiarity and to enhance their visibility. As stated in the Revised Strategy adopted on 2 May 2012, '[t]he input the experts can give to the CoR consultative activities could make the link to the subsidiarity debate in the Member States, strengthen the mutual comprehension and thus bring the CoR closer to its local and regional partners.'[92]

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[92] CoR, Subsidiarity Monitoring: a revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.

The Subsidiarity Expert Group provides input to the Subsidiarity Steering Group to establish a list of five priority initiatives to be monitored every year under the Subsidiarity Work Programme. These are selected by using a selection criteria that considers the political interest for LRAs, the fact that they concern competences of LRAs and that they bear a potential subsidiarity dimension.

Following the interviewees, this Expert Group functions well. The expertise of its members permits the selection of priority dossiers from a subsidiarity point of view. Its small size allows for more flexible and quicker reaction.

This being said, the first consultation of the Subsidiarity Expert Group – on the own-initiative Opinion on 'Devolution in the European Union and the place for local and regional self-government in EU policy making and delivery' – somewhat contradicted this assumption.[93] Indeed, only two experts replied to the consultation and one response came from a SMN partner who was not part of the Expert Group (the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities – COSLA). The report issued on 7 February 2013 by the rapporteur Mr F. Schausberger (AT/EPP) stated that '[n]o systematic survey has been carried out among the experts to find out the reasons for the low level of participation. The period of the year (end of year holiday) and abstract nature of the topic (not an actual subsidiarity analysis of a given legislative proposal) may have played a role. However, some spontaneous reactions showed another element of explanation. Some experts who did not send a contribution indicated that they had wished to consult within their own regional or local authorities to back up their position and that the consultation deadline did not allow for this. Although experts have been selected in the light of their personal expertise (legal background and practical experience with subsidiarity analyses) and are not requested to express the official position of their employing authority, this approach should be taken into account when setting the consultation timetables. Sufficient time should be allowed to enable experts to consult in their respective constituency. Secondly, the consultation attracted an interesting contribution from an SMN partner who is not on the Subsidiarity Expert Group. This would tend to plead for a clear opening of consultations of the Expert Group to other interested SMN partners.'[94]

According to a member of the Expert Group, rules could be clearer about the capacity in which the members of the Expert Group make their submissions. The CoR Secretariat has to judge this capacity and to assess whom they represent. Moreover, a minimum requirement of the CoR Secretariat is to justify

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[93] However, subsequent consultations have invalidated this observation.
[94] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Documents/SEGconsultation_Devolution_Report.docx (EN).

the views with evidence, i.e. refer to other documents, consult external people, include footnotes and references to studies, etc.

3.3.8 Partners

By October 2014, the SMN included 149 partners.[95]

The majority of these partners are parliaments or assemblies representing regions with legislative powers (44), while the other partners are governments or executives representing regions with legislative powers (29), local or regional authorities without legislative powers (33), associations of regional and/or local authorities (33), CoR national delegations (five) and national parliaments (five).

It is noticeable that not all these partners are involved in the Early Warning System, since only national parliaments and, to a lesser extent, regional parliaments, are included in the system.[96] Yet, the other partners also raise their voice and provide input to the consultations issued by the SMN.

Another interesting point is that CALRE is itself partner of the SMN, which may increase the visibility and representation of regional parliaments in the SMN.

The main network through which national parliaments exchange information on subsidiarity is the Inter-parliamentary EU Information Exchange Platform (IPEX) website.[97] Those parliaments that are also part of the SMN do not generally take part in the consultations but are nevertheless informed of the activities of the SMN.

As shown in the list of partners of the SMN, not all the regions and localities of Europe are represented in the SMN. This lack of representation of the SMN partners has been considered as a problem in getting a real impact on European decision-making by certain interviewees. The registered contacts of the SMN Network were surveyed (getting 11 useful reactions) on their opinion on the

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[95] http://extranet.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/Documents/SMN%20-%20List%20of%20Network%20Partners/SMN%20-%20List%20of%20Network%20Partners%20-%20EN%20-%207%20Oct%202014_MASTER%20LIST.pdf (EN).

[96] In short, national parliaments have eight weeks starting from the date of transmission of the EU draft legislation to submit a reasoned opinion to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission if they consider that the draft infringes the principle of subsidiarity. Moreover, as the Protocol makes clear, 'it is for each national parliament to consult, where appropriate, regional parliaments having legislative powers.'

[97] http://www.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/home/home.do (EN/FR). The regional parliaments mainly use the REGPEX website[97] which is a sub-network of the SMN:
http://extranet.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/regpex/Pages/default.aspx (EN).

geographical representation. The majority of responses saw no problem with the geographical distribution of partners, as shown in the graph below (see figure 22 and table 18).
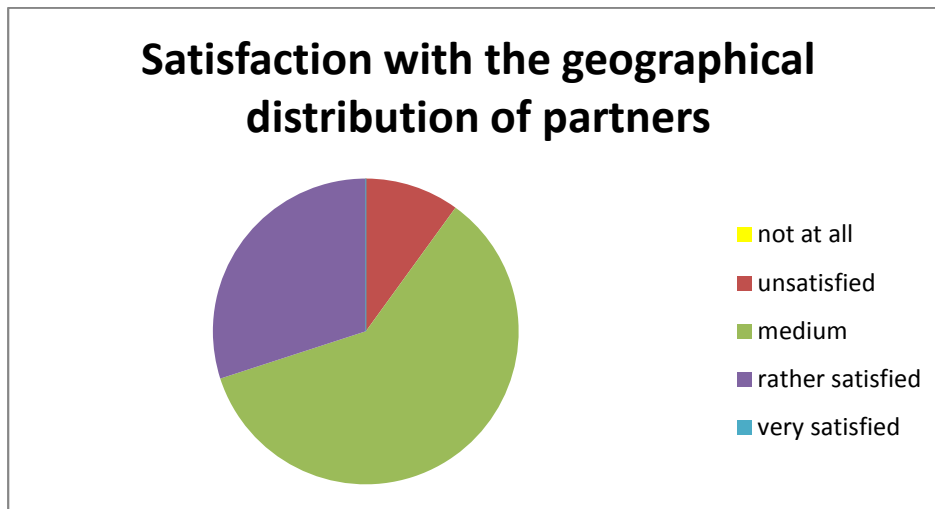

Figure 22: Satisfaction with the geographical distribution of partners (n=10)

Satisfaction with the geographical distribution of partners	
not at all	0
unsatisfied	0.1
medium	0.6
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0

Table 18: Satisfaction with the geographical distribution of partners in percentages (n=10)

The SMN partners were also surveyed about the reasons why they joined the SMN. Most importantly, the SMN partners joined in order to address the challenges in the implementation of EU policies and to exchange information with the CoR (both were rated at least important by all respondents). Second, they also joined to increase the interaction with other partners, and increase the visibility (all deemed at least not so important). Lastly, less important, but still rather important was to increase the impact of the work on the CoR and to look for an EU project partner.
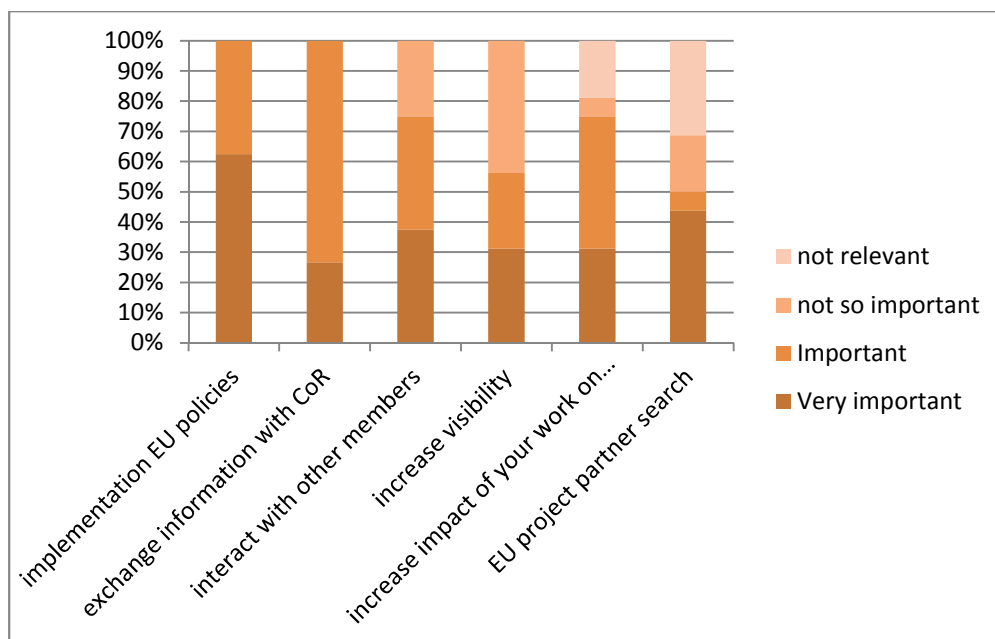
Figure 23: Reasons to join (n=11)

3.3.9 Good practices

So far, the best results to consultations in terms of turnout consisted in 16 replies: eight from the SMN partners and eight from the expert group.

Interviewees referred to several examples as good practices of the use of the SMN. For some officials from political groups, a good practice was constituted by the so-called Monti II regulation,[98] in which the CoR was involved but in the end, the main actors were the national parliaments. This is the first case in which the European Commission received a 'yellow card' from national parliaments. On 30 May 2012, the College of Commissioners confirmed that the reasoned opinions received from 12 national parliaments' chambers (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom) on the Monti II regulation amounted to 19 votes – over one-third of 54, thus passing the threshold for the 'yellow card' procedure. On 12 September 2012, the EU Employment Commissioner announced the withdrawal of the proposal to the European Parliament's Employment Committee.[99]

According to a SMN partner and a member of the SMN Expert Group, the best example of good practices was the intervention of the SMN with regard to the Urban Mobility Package discussed by the European Commission. In June 2013,

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[98] Commission proposal for a Council regulation on the exercise of the right to take collective action within the context of the freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services, COM(2012)130.
[99] For further information see http://www.euractiv.com/fr/node/514793 (EN).

the CoR organized a session with partners of the SMN and of the European Commission. In a proactive approach, partners of the SMN and the CoR raised the argument that certain issues put forward by the Commission were in breach of the subsidiarity principle. Hence, the Commission reworked its draft in order to comply with the subsidiarity principle.

3.3.10   Visibility

In the Revised Strategy for the CoR adopted in 2 May 2012, a specific section is devoted to the political governance of the SMN by the Subsidiarity Steering Group. It is notably mentioned that '[s]pecial attention should also be given to regularly inform the relevant Commissions of the CoR about the findings and the progress of the Subsidiarity Work Programme in their specific fields in order to receive their feedback and to ensure a coherent and reactive process.'[100] This regular information of relevant Commissions of the CoR permits notably to increase the visibility of the findings of the SMN.

The results of the consultations of the SMN on specific EU draft legislation are generally published in a report available on the internet. For instance, the SMN was consulted on a Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Organic Production and Labelling of Organic Products (Com(2014) 180). The consultation ran from 16 April to 26 May 2014 and a total of thirteen contributions were received, out of which nine were submitted by SMN partners, three by members of the Subsidiarity Expert Group and one by a local stakeholder. The results of the consultation were published in a report on the CoR subsidiarity website and shared with the rapporteur, Mr H. Maij (NL/EPP) and with the European Commission.[101]

Another example of good visibility of SMN consultations may be found in the consultation of the SMN in relation to the EU waste policy and legislation.[102] This consultation was mentioned by the European Commission in its Annual Report 2013 on Subsidiarity and Proportionality.[103]

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[100] Subsidiarity Monitoring: a Revised Strategy for the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 606/2012.
[101] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/Observations2014/COM%20(2014)%20180%20860ce890ecc54e2dbf 32defbd5e433c4/Report%20consultation%20Organic%20farming.pdf (EN).
[102] The report on the consultation of the Subsidiarity Expert Group and the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network on the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directives 2008/98/EC on waste, 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste, 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste, 2000/53/EC on end-of-life vehicles, 2006/66/EC on batteries and accumulators and waste batteries and accumulators, and 2012/19/EU on waste electrical and electronic equipment (COM(2014) 397 final), available at https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/news/Documents/Waste%20Consultation/Report_revision_%20EU_was te_legislation_FINAL.pdf (EN).
[103] http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/better_regulation/documents/2013_subsidiarity_report_en.pdf (EN), p. 6.

In certain cases, the contributions of the SMN partners are also published individually on the SMN website. This was notably the case of the consultations of both SMN and REGPEX in relation to the Ports Package initiative.[104] A summary of the concerns expressed through these consultations was published by the European Commission in its above-mentioned Annual Report 2013 on Subsidiarity and Proportionality.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the CoR 2013 Subsidiarity Annual Report, '[t]he Subsidiarity Steering Group was able to bring the views of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network partners into the political process of the CoR by making their findings known at meetings of the political groups, the thematic commissions and at plenary sessions.'[105]

In terms of visibility and awareness raising, interviewees expressed their satisfaction with the results of the SMN. There are other bodies interested in subsidiarity issues, as CALRE. Yet, partners feel that the most efficient way to express their voice is the SMN. CALRE also supports the SMN in providing information to its partners on subsidiarity.

The partners of the SMN were surveyed on their appreciation of the visibility of the SMN. As demonstrated in the graph below, the majority of responses indicated a medium satisfaction and the other responses indicated a higher degree of satisfaction (rather satisfied to very satisfied) (see figure 24 and table 19).
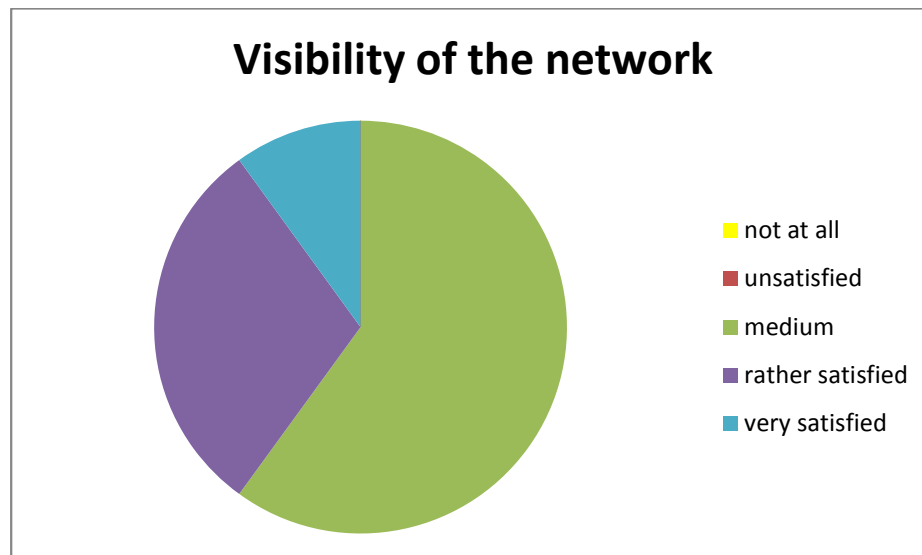
Figure 24: Satisfaction with the visibility of the network (n=10)

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[104] http://extranet.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/regpex/Pages/Ports-Package.aspx (EN).
[105]The 2013 Subsidiarity Annual Report is available at
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/Documents/Annual%20Report%202013%20Exec%20Summary/Subsidiarity%20Annual%20Report%202013%20Exec%20Sum%20en.pdf (EN).

Satisfaction with the visibility of the network	
not at all	0
unsatisfied	0
medium	0.6
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0.1

Table 19: Satisfaction with the visibility of the network in percentages (n=10)

Hence, it seems that there is a high degree of visibility of the SMN. Yet, visibility can always be improved. For instance, the organization of additional training and workshops may provide support to the partners and attract new ones.

3.3.11 Timing

The SMN consultations are time-consuming, which renders it sometimes difficult to fit in the legislative process. The time-limit of eight weeks imposed by the Early Warning System requires that exchanges between SMN partners and the Network Administration go faster or that members share responsibilities to speed up the process. Moreover, SMN partners have to be contacted as early as possible to increase the outcome of the consultation process given the tight deadlines imposed by the Early Warning System.

3.3.12 Impact on the political work of CoR

As mentioned above, the SMN's relevance rests largely on the fact whether its results are taken into consideration by the CoR rapporteurs in their Opinions. In CoR Opinions on EU legislative proposals in areas not falling within the EU's exclusive field of competence, there has to be an assessment of the compliance of EU draft legislation with the principle of subsidiarity. Other Opinions may, if necessary include references to this principle whenever appropriate.[106] These Opinions are drafted by rapporteurs with the support of the CoR administration and the SMN. Indeed, the SMN may produce substantive and in-house evidence on subsidiarity, coming directly from the LRAs. Yet, the rapporteur is not obliged to use the results from the SMN consultations.

The evidence transmitted by the partners of the SMN may in certain cases be trumped by the political agenda. Hence, subsidiarity issues identified by the SMN or the Subsidiarity Expert Group may sometimes be subsequently ignored by the political assembly.

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[106] CoR Rule of Procedure 55, paragraph 2.

Figure 25 and table 20 below show that the surveyed partners were in majority medium satisfied with the impact of the SMN on the political work of the CoR. Some of them expressly requested a better taking into consideration of the SMN consultations in the Opinions drafted by the rapporteurs – or at least to be informed of the reasons for leaving them out of the Opinions.
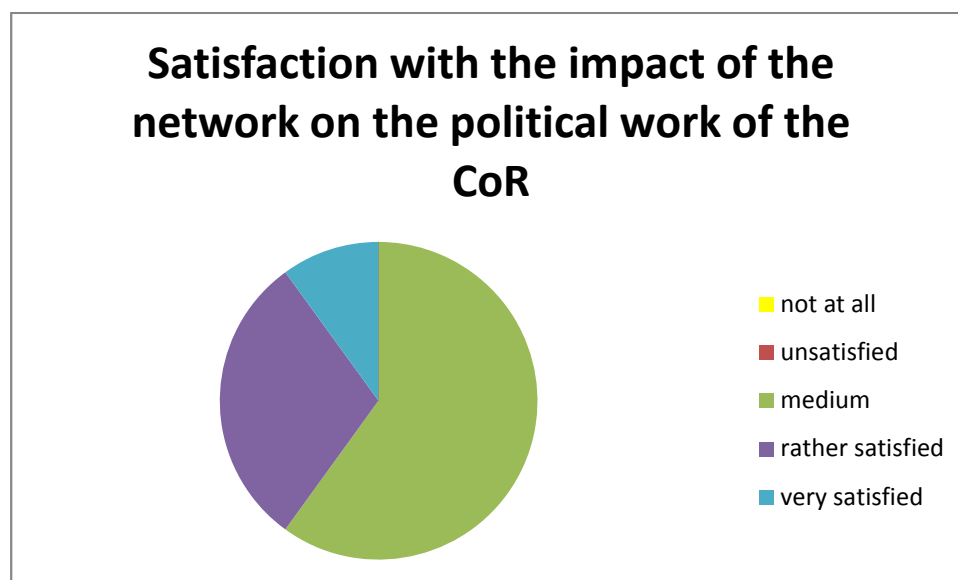

Figure 25: Satisfaction with the impact of the network on the political work of the CoR (n=10)

Satisfaction with the impact of the network on the political work of the CoR	
not at all	0
unsatisfied	0
medium	0.6
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0.1

Table 20: Satisfaction with the impact of the network on the political work of the CoR (n=10).

3.3.13   Networking capacity

Some respondents indicated that the SMN partners already know each other rather well, and that they do not need the CoR network to improve the networking capacity. Other partners specifically suggested the creation within the SMN of a database of contact persons in all SMN partners in order to increase and improve the exchange of information.

In general, many respondents agree that more interaction is needed between the SMN partners. So far, most of the partners elaborate their subsidiarity opinions independently. Yet, it is argued that a better exchange of information and coordination between the partners could strengthen the overall impact of the results stemming from the SMN.

Certain SMN partners deplored the lack of communication to the members. Generally, emails to the partners are automatically generated. A more personal invitation or closer personal contact might reinforce the working of the SMN.

As indicated in the figure 26 and table 21 below, the majority of surveyed SMN partners were medium satisfied with the interaction between the partners. Yet, some of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied at all with the current system. They noted that there is only interaction between very few active partners, such as the members of the Subsidiarity Expert Group.
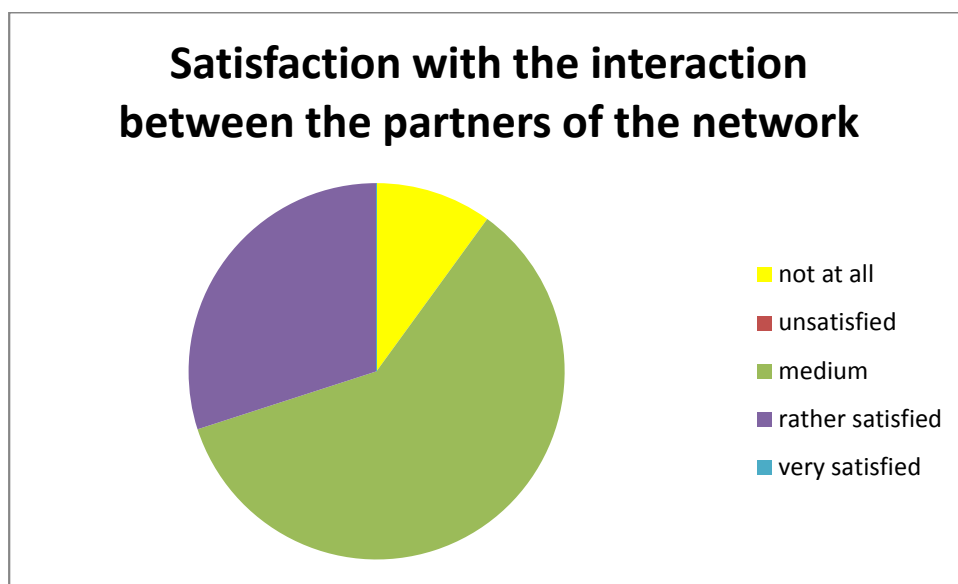
Figure 26: Satisfaction with the interaction between the partners of the network (n=10).

Satisfaction with the interaction between the partners	
not at all	0.1
Unsatisfied	0
Medium	0.6
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0

Table 21: Satisfaction with the interaction between partners of the network in percentages (n=10)

3.3.14   Website

The CoR administration is in charge of running the SMN website and keeping it up to date.

It results from the views expressed by several interviewees that the exchange of information between SMN partners could be improved on its website. For instance, a standard form for informing the CoR and the SMN partners is available on the websites of SMN/REGPEX but it is not really used. The SMN

partners should be encouraged to use this standard form in order to facilitate and speed up the exchange of information.

In addition, one SMN partner expressed the wish to have a database of contact persons within each SMN partner.

As demonstrated in the graph below, the surveyed partners were generally medium satisfied with the website, but one-fifth nevertheless declared to be unsatisfied with its current settings.
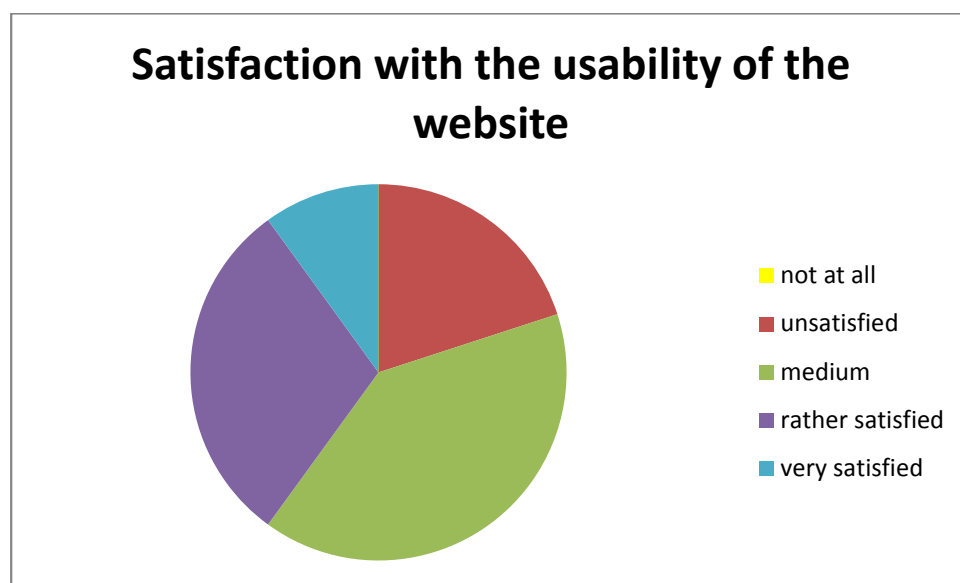
Figure 27: Satisfaction with the usability of the website (n=10)

Satisfaction with the usability of the website	
not at all	0
unsatisfied	0.2
medium	0.4
rather satisfied	0.3
very satisfied	0.1

Table 22: Satisfaction with the usability of the website in percentages (n=10)

3.3.15 Translations

The CoR provides a systematic translation only for selected files. Certain partners request that their observations or contributions should be translated in the different languages in their entirety and be made available through SMN to all partners. However, for budgetary reasons, it is impossible for the CoR to provide such full-length translations of all observations submitted. Instead, the CoR has chosen to develop a standard form in English for SMN partners on which they can indicate the most important information.

The graph below demonstrates the mitigated appreciation of the surveyed SMN partners with regard to the translation issue (see figure 28 and table 23).

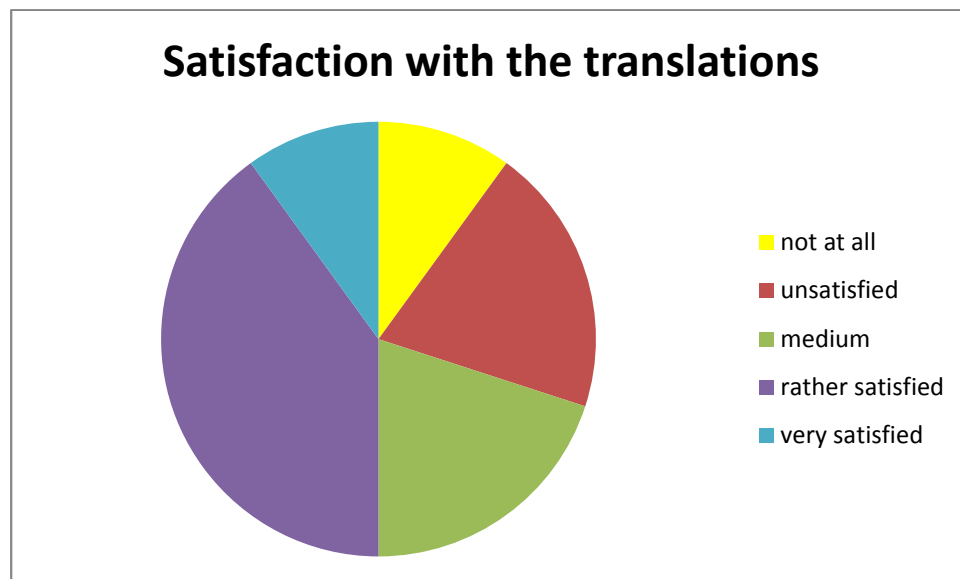*Figure 28: Satisfaction with the translations (n=10)*

Satisfaction with the translations	
not at all	0.1
Unsatisfied	0.2
Medium	0.2
rather satisfied	0.4
very satisfied	0.1

Table 23: Satisfaction with the translations in percentages (n=10)

3.4   Comparison of the platforms

3.4.1 Similarities and differences between the different platforms

The ambitions of the three platforms/network are twofold since they aim (a) to feed their results into the CoR political work and support its activities and (b) to offer these results to the LRAs.

As a political institution, the CoR uses the information gathered by the platforms/network in the political process. Hence, the consultations of the platforms are often targeted to ensure that the end product itself is functional for politicians. The technical analysis and summary should be done by the administration. For all three platforms/network analyzed in this study, the results of the consultations of the platforms/network are summarized by Unit E2 of the CoR. However, there are significant differences among the

platforms/network as to human resources. While there are four administrators involved in the SMN administration, there are three people involved in the administration of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform – supported by interns and a part time webmaster – and there is only one person for the EGTC. Once the results of the consultations have been summarized, the summary is sent to the officials from political groups, to the rapporteurs and to the Directorate C. There is a formal reference to the consultation in the Opinion.[107] As to the content, it is up to the rapporteur in charge of drafting the Opinion to decide whether to take the contribution into consideration or not. There is only an obligation to include a statement on subsidiarity in CoR Opinions on legislative acts in areas not falling within the Union's exclusive field of competence.[108]

In all three platforms/network, the issue of timing is very important. Ideally, the results of the consultations should feed into the legislative work. In practice, one may deplore that the consultation process may be too lengthy for the results to be taken into consideration. The two platforms and the network have to be proactive. This is only possible if the platforms/network are aware of the internal calendars and deadlines related to CoR Opinions. Their members have to be contacted as early as possible. Similarly, the members of the Steering Committee, the Task Force or the Expert Group have to receive the documents related to meetings or reports early in order to adequately prepare feedback or to draft comments in advance to a meeting. This is sometimes difficult to handle for the Platform/network team and could be facilitated by additional staff member(s) joining the team.

Yet, the potential of these platforms/network should not be limited to the legislative process as such. In the pre-legislative phase, the analysis of the potential territorial impact of EU initiatives may also provide for an interesting area in which the platforms/network may be involved. This has been expressly highlighted in this study in relation to the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, but it is also relevant for the SMN in order to assess the impact of future EU initiatives in relation to subsidiarity. It should also be recalled that the CoR may issue Prospective Opinions on future European policies or Outlook Opinions. Such Outlook Opinions may be requested by the European Commission to feed its upstream preparations for EU draft legislation. As mentioned in the Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, '[t]he Commission welcomes a more proactive role for the Committee through outlook opinions on future Union policies before action is taken at Union level and in areas where the Committee has appropriate local information resources. […] The time limit for such a consultation may not be

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[107] This is not the case as far as the EGTCs are concerned.
[108] CoR Rule of Procedure 55, paragraph 2.

less than one month from the date on which the Committee's President receives notification to this effect. […]'[109]

While *a priori* the pre-legislative phase provides for a fertile ground especially for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the SMN, there is no reason to exclude that the EGTC Platform may also be involved in consultations in view of a future EU initiative relating to territorial cohesion or EGTCs for instance.

3.4.2 Good practices

In relation to the 2020 Monitoring Platform, the surveys on the FIs have been identified as a good practice. In particular, the combination of differing types of surveys (qualitative/quantitative) for the different FIs has been appreciated. In the past, most surveys were qualitative oriented with open questions. These were however rather time-consuming for participants, and at the time of the surveys on the seven FIs, the administrators at the CoR discovered a certain survey fatigue. For this reason, in recent years, quantitative surveys with multiple choices were conducted instead of open questionnaires. This new methodology has received a large approval by the surveyed members of the 2020 Monitoring Platform. Hence, the other platform/network should also strive to add surveys with multiple choices and concise answers to their survey toolbox rather than focusing solely on open questions which may be more time-consuming for the respondents. Of course, the SMN for example might want to continue to rely more on qualitative inputs to support their subsidiarity opinions than the Europe 2020, whose work is more based on gathering the perceptions of the LRAs on the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Probably the best example of good practices involving the EGTC is provided by the discussions on the revisions of the regulation on EGTCs. The CoR delivered an Opinion on 'The review of the EGTC Regulation'[110] in which the CoR made a number of recommendations to the European Commission based on the results of a consultation. The European Commission submitted a revised proposal which took into account many of the recommendations made by the CoR.[111] Following this new proposal, changes were suggested by a new CoR Opinion delivered in 2012.[112] Driven by the CoR Opinions, the CoR was invited to the three meetings held between the European Parliament, the Commission and the

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[109] Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, 16 February 2012, http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/interinstitutional/Documents/EN.pdf (EN).

[110] CDR 100/2010 fin, rapporteur Mr A. Nuñez Feijoo (EPP/ES).

[111] These recommendations relate both to an earlier CoR Opinion CdR 308/2007 fin and the Opinion CdR 100/2010 fin.

[112] Opinion of the Committee of the Regions, Revision of the EGTC Regulation, 15-16 February 2012, COTER-V-022.

Council to negotiate the revision of the EGTC Regulation, following the 'trilogue' procedure foreseen in Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament. Thanks to this active involvement, the Regulation (EU) 1302/2013 amending the EGTC legal framework, which has been the outcome of the negotiation, incorporated and reflected the interests of the EGTCs and LRAs represented by the CoR. Consequently, the CoR was able to increase its profile as pole of expertise towards the EU institutions. As noted by numerous interviewees, this was the first time that 100% of a CoR Opinion had been followed by another EU institution.

Interviewees referred to several examples as good practices of the use of the SMN, among which one may highlight the intervention of the SMN with regard to the Urban Mobility Package discussed by the European Commission. In June 2013, the CoR organized a session with partners of the SMN and of the European Commission. In a proactive approach, partners of the SMN and the CoR raised the argument that certain issues put forward by the Commission were in breach of the subsidiarity principle. Hence, the Commission reworked its draft in order to comply with the subsidiarity principle.

3.4.3   Members' involvement

A general comment made in relation to the three platforms/network in the interviews has consisted in the fact that it is often the same members participating in platforms/network. This may be a reason to create an expert group or a task force, so as to permit a direct contact and to move faster with better reactions. On the other hand, the concentration of active participation on a handful of members undermines the representativeness of such consultations.

In general, it is noted by surveyed members that the platforms/network should be more interactive. The platforms/network administrators have tried to enhance this interaction by using social media tools, as the creation of a LinkedIn group for instance. This tool allows for more rapid communication between the members and the administrators. Other social networks, as Twitter and Facebook could also help the platforms/network members to increase short discussions and information sharing.

In addition, the personal contact between members and administrators should be fostered. This is a common feature to the three platforms/network analyzed in this study.

A better exchange of information and coordination between the partners strengthens the overall impact of the results stemming from the platforms/network.

Recommendations to foster members' involvement and interaction include:

- Inform local and regional authorities that are not members of the platforms/network on the importance of the platforms/network;
- Inform members of the platforms/network on the importance of their interventions;
- Increase the motivation of members by improving the follow-up to their contributions, notably through nominative references to their input or contribution;
- Create a database of contact persons of the platforms/network members, as was already one with REGPEX;
- Create an informal forum where members can exchange information and best practices on an informal basis;

3.5   Comparison with similar platforms of other EU institutions and from outside

This section selects three platforms of other EU institutions similar to the ones discussed above.[113] A general reason for selecting these platforms is their close relation to EU institutions. These three platforms/network are briefly presented in this section in view of identifying interesting features that could provide for sources of inspiration for the three platforms/network analyzed in this study.

First, there is the Capacity 4Dev Platform which was established by the European Commission. This platform has been expressly mentioned as an illustration of similar platforms in the order form of this study.[114] Moreover, it presents two interesting features that could inspire future developments of the three platforms/network analysed in this study, namely its informal character and the possibility to work in thematic clusters/sub-groups.

Second, the European Technology Platforms (ETPs), were created following a call of the European Council. These ETPs have close links with the European Commission but are independent industry-led initiatives. The choice to examine these ETPs in this study is based on a number of reasons: first, the role of ETPs

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[113] Other platforms could have been taken into consideration. In Opinion CdR 371/2011, the rapporteur Mr M. Delebarre (FR/EPP) suggested the EGTC Platform could be given a role similar to that of the urban development platform proposed by the Commission in its proposal for a regulation on the European Regional Development Fund. This platform was proposed to foster both the dialogue and the exchange on urban policy at the European level. However, it was opposed by the MEPs and consequently never established in practice. Another platform that could have been examined is the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN). For further information, see http://www.errin.eu/ (EN).

[114] Order Form No. 5261, p. 4.

has been recognized by the European Commission as 'part of the external advice and societal engagement needed to implement Horizon 2020'. This constitutes an interesting parallelism with the involvement of LRAs in the implementation of Horizon 2020. Second, these platforms are encouraged to work in flexible clusters addressing the key societal challenges facing Europe, which may similarly be taken into consideration as a source of inspiration for the three platforms/network.

The third platform, the European Regional and Local Health Authorities (EUREGHA) Platform was launched following a CoR Opinion. However, both the EUREGHA Network and its Platform are self-standing and as such independent from EU institutions. This Platform has been selected because of its close links with the CoR and because it has developed the creation of working groups on expert level to focus on specific issues.

3.5.1   Capacity 4Dev Platform

The Capacity 4Dev[115] is a Platform established in 2009 by the European Commission Directorate General EuropeAid to support a comprehensive Strategy on 'Reforming Technical Cooperation (TC) and Project Implementation Units (PIU)'.[116] Since its establishment, it has continuously evolved and eventually, an enhanced version of the Capacity 4Dev was launched in October 2010. Following this evolution, the Platform has become EuropeAid's corporate knowledge management tool aimed to support collaboration, exchange of information and interactivity both inside the European Union (staff of DG Development and Cooperation, other DGs of the European Commission, European External Action Service, Development Agencies of Member States…) and with the rest of the world (international development organizations, partner countries, consultants, NGOs etc).

The membership of the Platform is open to anyone with a professional interest in development, aid and cooperation issues. On average 40% of the members come from the European Commission headquarters and EU Delegations, while 60% come *inter alia* from governments, civil society organizations, the private sector or academia, also outside the EU.[117]

This Platform presents hundreds of 'Voices and Views' which are regularly posted by its members. As a registered member, one can share ideas,

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[115] http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu (EN).
[116] For further information, see http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-cd-tc/document/reforming-technical-cooperation-and-project-implementation-units-backbone-strategy (EN).
[117] http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/content/way-forward-european-union-africa#cap4dev (EN).

knowledge, resources, events, documents, comments with other members participating in existing online working groups, or create one's own working group. A number of basic Terms and Conditions/rules of conduct are available on the website to avoid that inappropriate content may be posted by members, to report a rule infraction, to inform members of disciplinary measures and to enunciate suggestions for better posting.[118]

As mentioned on the European Commission's website for international cooperation and development, '[k]nowledge sharing is a key driver for Capacity Development both on donors' side and on the aid recipients side. It facilitates exchange on practices, and messages that promote ownership, change and results.'[119] In this regard, and without entering into further details within the scope of this study, the Platform seems to be an efficient tool for its users.

This Platform presents two features that could be interesting from a comparative perspective for the three platforms/network analyzed in this study: its informal character and the possibility to work in thematic clusters/sub-groups.

- The establishment of such type of informal forum corresponds indeed to a specific request expressed by several interviewees in the framework of this study, especially with regard to the subsidiarity monitoring and the EGTCs. Hence, the CoR could find inspiration in this Capacity 4Dev Platform to establish an additional forum where registered members could express their views on subsidiarity and territorial cooperation in a more lively manner.

- The division of the Platform in thematic working groups may constitute an efficient mechanism to enhance the quality of analysis on specific subtopics, sectors or thematic clusters and allow closer cooperation/exchange of ideas between the members.[120]

3.5.2 European Technology Platforms

ETPs were established in 2003 following a call of the European Council for a strengthening of the European research area by creating ETPs '[…] bringing together technological know-how, industry, regulators and financial institutions to develop a strategic agenda for leading technologies.' They are 'industry-led stakeholder fora that develop short to long-term research and innovation

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[118] http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/conditions (EN).
[119] http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm (EN).
[120] This idea will be further developed in part 3.6 of this study.

agendas and roadmaps for action at EU and national level to be supported by both private and public funding.'[121]

In its Horizon 2020 proposal for an integrated research and innovation framework programme, the European Commission recognizes the role of ETPs as 'part of the external advice and societal engagement needed to implement Horizon 2020'. The European Commission has supported the ETPs' development and has carried out a facilitation role but the ETPs are essentially bottom-up industry-led initiatives which are independent and self-financed. They are committed to a structured dialogue on research priorities.

So far, the European Commission has recognized 40 ETPs. In its 'Strategy for European Technology Platforms: ETP 2020', the European Commission considers that '[f]ora and networks such as ETPs are important because markets, while being powerful drivers of innovation, often do not function perfectly when it comes to generating ideas in an environment with a high degree of uncertainty and a need for coordination, which typifies the innovation process. Networks facilitate the move to more open models of innovation by helping improve the innovation capacity of individual firms. (…) Furthermore, small firms in particular have been able to take advantage of networks in order to overcome the disadvantages of their size.'[122]

In a 2009 report of the ETP Expert Group[123] on 'Strengthening the role of European Technology Platforms in addressing Europe's Grand Societal Challenges', the Expert Group proposes 'that in future all ETPs should be encouraged to work in flexible clusters focused on addressing the key societal challenges facing Europe. The clusters should involve all relevant stakeholders, work across all aspects of the knowledge triangle, and be responsible for implementing potential solutions. ETPs will be able to contribute more to focus research programmes towards the challenges faced by European society and also to bring the results of that research to the global marketplace.'[124]

Here again, the discussion turns around the subdivision of the work in specific clusters, with an additional element being the flexibility of the clusters and the temporary feature of these clusters. Moreover, the report encourages ETPs to involve key stakeholders for each particular challenge.

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[121] European Commission Staff Working Document. Strategy for European Technology Platforms: ETP 2020, available at ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/etp/docs/swd-2013-strategy-etp-2020_en.pdf (EN), p. 2.

[122] *Ibid*. See also http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=etp (EN).

[123] After a first evaluation of ETPs in 2008, an expert group composed by 11 members was established to review and report on how the ETPs could contribute more effectively to EU, national and regional policy initiatives.

[124] ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/etp/docs/fa-industrialresearch-b5-full-publication-rp_en.pdf (EN), p. 2.

The involvement of members (and even beyond membership) is indeed a very important point that was highlighted in this study in relation to the CoR platforms/network analyzed. The stronger involvement of members is a general feature that should be fostered in the platforms/network.

Yet, it is not certain whether this involvement should be advocated across all aspects in relation to the three platforms/network analyzed in this study. It has been repeated that the CoR rapporteurs are not obliged to use the contributions or the results of the consultations of the platforms/network in their Opinions. This may generate a certain degree of frustration, as mentioned *supra*. However, it should be recalled that the CoR is a political institution and that such system is necessary to preserve this political character. Hence, while the involvement of members should be strongly advocated at the stage of the input, it seems that the final decision whether to integrate the input or not should be left to the CoR Members.

3.5.3   European Regional and Local Health Authorities (EUREGHA)

Another interesting network is the European Regional and Local Health Authorities Network. This network is composed of regional and local health authorities focused on public health. It was established in 2006 following a CoR Opinion concerning patient mobility and open coordination on health quality care. It 'aims to promote collaboration amongst regions and local authorities, more specifically regional and local health authorities in Europe, within the framework of the policies relating to public health and health care, as well as to establish focused collaboration with the Institutions of the European Union and with the international and public organizations related to public health and health care throughout the world.'[125]

This network functioned first as a free and informal network from 2006 to 2011, then as a EUREGHA ASBL (non-profit association in Belgian law) since 2012. Nowadays, it is a legally established organization having a permanent secretariat in Brussels organizing the association's meetings and management of daily activities. The main forum in which policies are discussed and decided is the EUREGHA General Assembly, while the Executive Board is the implementing organ. The network is divided in several working streams: Mental Health, Cancer Screening, eHealth, Cross-Border Healthcare and Integrated Care.[126]

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[125] http://www.euregha.net/2012-11-28-12-46-27 (EN).
[126] For further information, see :
http://www.euregha.net/2012-11-28-12-46-27/2-uncategorised/107-workingstreamspage (EN).

EUREGHA has established a Platform to foster the exchange of information between its members in the health sector. The membership may be different for the Platform than the membership of the network. Platform members do not pay any contribution but they have no voting rights, as opposed to the full network members. The EUREGHA has 10 full members, while the EUREGHA Platform has 87 members.

Over the years, EUREGHA has become a privileged interlocutor for the EU institutions and other stakeholders. It has notably supported, together with DG for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO), the CoR in the organisation of the Technical Platforms for Cooperation in Health created in 2010.

Interestingly, the network permits the creation of working groups on expert level to focus on specific issues. This methodology was already highlighted above for another network (Capacity 4Dev) and could constitute an interesting source of inspiration for the three platforms/network analyzed in this study.[127]

3.6 Challenges and potential in the context of the future of the CoR and the CoR study on the 'Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning'

As mentioned in the previously-released CoR study on the 'Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning', '[t]he most important ingredient in the CoR opinions is the CoR' s **unique expertise**, which stems from up-to-date data and analysis coming from a network of members (…). The CoR should strive to base **such expertise on a rich and constant feed of quantitative and qualitative data that back up the arguments and views in the CoR's opinions.** In this respect, the CoR opinions may have an indirect influence on the policy priorities of EU institutions. The influence will rest on items for which the CoR has developed a strong and unique expertise, where only the CoR can provide sound opinions on the basis of bottom-up policy and input processes.'[128]

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[127] This methodology of dividing the platforms/network in thematic clusters or working groups will be further examined in section 3.6.

[128] *Committee of the Regions' Future Role and Institutional Positioning,* Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, T. Corthaut, P. Schmitt & A. Marx), 2014, available at http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning/CoR-Future-Institutional-Positioning.pdf (EN), pp. 19-20. The figures of the SMN membership were updated to January 2015.

As to the information sharing, the study further mentions that '[t]he CoR opinion take-up would benefit from advances in the development of the CoR's expert function. Such expertise would also increase the CoR's visibility provided it could be mobilised at short notice. It would enhance the standing of the CoR as the voice of LRAs. This type of expertise results from information and analyses based on **a bottom-up approach and informed** by survey data and information that comes from a network of partners of the 'CoR Subsidiarity Monitoring Network,' the members of the 'Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform,' and those that are part of the 'Register of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation'. The topics of importance (*les domaines d'excellence*) include territorial cohesion, urban policy, macro regions and impact assessments because of their direct relevance to LRAs. The topics would also involve issues related to governance mechanisms such as territorial and subsidiarity analyses and multilevel governance.'[129]

Given the unique position of the CoR as the EU advisory body representing LRAs, the CoR 'will be increasingly consulted for its network capabilities as coordinator, interlocutor, mediator and expert.'[130] Hence, the CoR platforms and network where LRAs can exchange information, good practices and expertise are of crucial importance for the CoR.

3.6.1 Common challenges

A number of common challenges may be identified with regard to the specific platforms/network analyzed. In brief, these challenges may be summarized as follows:

- Maintaining and strengthening the interest and ownership of LRAs in the topics discussed by the platforms/network;
- Mobilising the pertinent expertise and good practices/experiences from the LRAs;
- Ensuring a strong involvement of LRAs in platforms/network;
- Strengthening the exchange of information and developing more personal contacts with the LRAs' contact persons;
- Improving the functionality and the updating of the websites of the platforms/network;
- Optimising the timing and synchronisation of contributions;

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[130] *Challenges at the Horizon 2025*, Study ordered by the European Union Committee of the Regions (written by W. Van Aken, A. Marx, P. Schmitt & K. Raube), 2014, available at: http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/challenges-horizon-2025.pdf (EN), p. 25.

- Getting a good return on surveys/consultations, and a good participation in events;
- Strengthening the links between CoR rapporteurs, CoR Members and the platforms/network in order to increase the visibility of the platforms/network;
- Increasing the number of translations of the contributions to the platforms/network.

3.6.2 Common potential

Several mechanisms may be suggested to face these challenges and to improve the potential of CoR platforms/network.

It seems indeed that innovative mechanisms have to be developed to respond to the main problematic that all three platforms/network are facing: the tight timing of the legislative process. It is of tremendous importance that the agendas of the different platforms/network and the CoR are more integrated and take better into consideration the agenda of other EU institutions. More often than not, the lack of information deters the platforms/network and the CoR of being able to timely consult their members on the issues. But even within the CoR, certain issues where the platform/network can have some impact should be flagged as early as possible in the process. The platforms/network currently face obstacles in all steps of the political process: knowing the agenda, the identification of issues, and lastly the time-consuming consultations which have faced low feedback.

The specialization into specific thematic clusters may speed up the process and consequently increase the platforms/network's efficiency. The division of the platforms/network in thematic working groups may constitute an efficient mechanism to enhance the quality of analysis on specific subtopics, sectors or thematic clusters and allow closer cooperation/exchange of ideas between the members. One could consider that the establishment of expert groups both in the SMN and in the EGTC Platform – although in the latter this group has been absorbed in the Platform – corresponds to the idea of having a working group exchanging ideas and having a close cooperation. Moreover, the SMN already organizes regular Thematic Subsidiarity Workshops in which partners or selected working groups discuss topics related to the priorities of the EU legislative agenda. They permit the subsidiarity debate to be directed towards more practical issues in policy making within specific areas.[131] The transposition of such methodology of subgroupings or expert groups to the

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[131] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/SubsidiarityWorkshops.aspx (EN).

Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform corresponds to a different rationale. In this Platform, one could suggest a division following each of the renewed Europe 2020 FIs, provided that the suggestions of Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform in the 'Blueprint for a renewed Europe 2020 Strategy' are taken into consideration and that the FIs are consequently revised. As far as the EGTC Platform is concerned, the creation of subgroups could eventually follow a number of common topics related to cross-border cooperation, even if such division seems less plausible in the field of EGTCs which each have their own specificities.

In addition to their involvement into the legislative consultative process of the CoR, the platforms/network analyzed in this study may also develop their potential in the pre-legislative phase. As mentioned in the Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission and the CoR,[132] 'the Committee's platforms and networks may provide a good access point to regional and local authorities and could therefore enable the Commission to reinforce the analysis of regional and local aspects in impact assessments if deemed necessary.' In addition, the Impact Assessment guidelines[133] of the European Commission provide for the possibility to ask for support from the CoR in preparing its impact assessments taking place in the pre-legislative phase. In order to reinforce its involvement in the pre-legislative phase, the CoR 'needs to refine a Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) methodology and implement the TIA Strategy in cooperation with the Commission, the European Parliament and other relevant stakeholders'.[134] In this view, the platforms/network could be associated to this methodology notably in conducting consultations providing for useful input for the TIAs.

It should also be recalled that the CoR may issue Prospective Opinions on future European policies or Outlook Opinions. Such Outlook Opinions may be requested by the European Commission to feed its upstream preparations for EU draft legislation.

In the pre-legislative phase, the time limit for CoR consultations is not as strict as in the legislative phase.[135] This may facilitate the involvement of the platforms/network in the pre-legislative activities of the CoR. While a priori the

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[132]   Protocol on the cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 39/2012 item 7:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:102:0006:0010:EN:PDF.

[133]   European Commission, 2009 "Impact assessment guidelines", SEC(2009) 92.

[134] This quote stems from the contribution in view of the 20th anniversary of the CoR submitted in January 2014 of the Subsidiarity Steering Committee.

[135] In relation to Outlook Opinions, the Protocol on the Cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions states that '[t]he time limit for such a consultation may not be less than one month from the date on which the Committee's President receives notification to this effect.'

pre-legislative phase provides for a fertile ground especially for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and the SMN, there is no reason to exclude that the EGTC Platform may also be involved in consultations in view of a future EU initiative relating to territorial cohesion or EGTCs for instance.

In relation to the follow-up of the contributions on these platforms/network, it has been suggested to better associate the rapporteur to the meetings of the platforms which are relevant to CoR Opinions. This is especially interesting for the SMN but could also be put forward for the two other platforms. A closer involvement of the platforms/network with the rapporteur in charge of drafting the CoR Opinion could enhance the visibility of the contributions made by the platforms/network and consequently increase the opportunities of the platform/network participants to see their contributions included in the Opinions. In general, the system established within the SMN following which the Subsidiarity Steering Group is regularly informing the relevant CoR Commissions about the findings and the progress of the Subsidiarity Work Programme in their specific fields in order to receive their feedback and to ensure a coherent and reactive process shall be fostered and promoted to the two other platforms. This task could be assigned to the Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and to the political coordinator in the EGTC Platform, given that the expert group has been absorbed by the Platform and that there is no other specific body in charge of governance. Such mechanism increases the visibility of the findings of the platforms/network as well as the coherence and general cooperation with the CoR.

Even further, one could plead for a review of the procedure following which, if the rapporteur decides to neglect the argument from the platforms/network members, the rapporteur should be required to reply to the member making the contributions and providing the member with arguments why the contribution has not been taken on board. However, it should be kept in mind that the CoR is a political institution and that such system is necessary to preserve this political character. Hence, while the involvement of members should be strongly supported, it seems that the final decision whether to integrate the input or not should be left to the CoR Members.

A practice developed by the SMN Secretariat could be taken into consideration as an interesting source of inspiration for the other platforms. The SMN Secretariat draws up a summary on the basis of the partners' contributions in targeted consultations and forwards this report to the rapporteur. The rapporteur may agree to publish the report on the SMN website and CoR TOAD portal.[136]

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[136] A list of targeted consultations is available at:
https://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/activities/Pages/Targetedconsultations.aspx (EN).

There is no similar system within the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform or the EGTC Platform. However, such mechanism ensures a broad information and may simultaneously stimulate participation to consultations.

The relation between the CoR platforms and the European Parliament could be improved. In the framework of the Agreement[137] with the European Parliament, new opportunities and synergies should be explored (e.g. studies). In addition, the platforms/network members could strive to promote the platforms/network and the issues discussed in bringing these issues more to the attention of the members' respective MEPs. This would strengthen the voice of the CoR, of the platforms and eventually of the platforms/network members.

For the platforms/network analyzed in this study, the functionality of the website plays a central role for its members. The majority of surveyed members considered this issue as very important. The website should be user-friendly and frequently updated with new uploaded documents available as soon as possible for the other members. As has been done for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform website, a logical division of sub-sections and an elimination of repetitive content may help to achieve these objectives. The EGTC Platform is also working on a website revision.

Another central issue is the problem of translations. The CoR provides a systematic translation, but only for selected files. Numerous members request that their observations or contributions should be translated in the different languages in their entirety and be made available through the platforms/network to all members. However, for budgetary reasons, it is impossible for the CoR to provide such full-length translations of all observations submitted.

As a response to this problem, the CoR has chosen to develop a standard form in English on SMN/REGPEX on which they can indicate the most important information. Yet, this standard form is not really used. The SMN partners should be encouraged to use this standard form in order to facilitate and speed up the exchange of information. Other possible solutions would be for the CoR to provide for summary translations or cooperate with the members for translations.

Finally, the example of the Capacity 4Dev Platform examined in point 3.5.1. of this study may provide for an interesting source of inspiration for the three platforms/network analyzed in this study. On this Platform, 'voices and views' can be posted by any registered member to share ideas, knowledge, resources,

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[137] This Agreement was concluded on 5 February 2014. It is available at:
http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/interinstitutional/Documents/ep-cor_a245.pdf (EN).

events, documents, comments with other members participating in existing online working groups, or create one's own working group. A number of basic Terms and Conditions/rules of conduct are available on the website to avoid that inappropriate content may be posted by members, to report a rule infraction, to inform members of disciplinary measures and to enunciate suggestions for better posting.[138] The knowledge sharing is the key driver of this Platform.

The establishment of such type of informal forum corresponds indeed to a specific request expressed by several interviewees in the framework of this study, especially with regard to the subsidiarity monitoring and the EGTCs. Hence, the CoR could find inspiration in this Capacity 4Dev Platform to establish an additional forum where registered members could express their views on subsidiarity and territorial cooperation in a more lively manner.

3.6.3 Specificities for each platform/network

3.6.3.1 EU 2020 Monitoring Platform

In its contribution in view of the 20th anniversary of the CoR submitted in January 2014, the Europe 2020 Steering Committee has summarized the political and operational challenges that remain for the future. It notably mentioned the necessity to maintain and strengthen the interest and ownership of LRAs in the Europe 2020 Strategy and mobilising the pertinent expertise and good practices/experiences from the local and regional level.

In order to address these challenges, the Steering Committee suggested a number of possible ways including the 'close coordination/integration of Europe 2020 monitoring activities with the CoR's political/consultative works by close cooperation and exchanges of the relevant teams' and '[e]nsuring strong mobilisation and involvement of the Monitoring Platform by responding to specific interests of Platform members in the process, proposing a stronger thematic focus on monitoring activities, and refining working methods and tools (review of website, social media, possible new more tailored information notes/reports).'

As a result of the interviews conducted for this study, one may agree that the maintaining and strengthening of the interest and ownership of LRAs in the Europe 2020 Strategy constitutes a major challenge.

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[138] http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/conditions (EN).

In this view, the potential of the Platform may be developed in several directions. One of them could be the closer association of the Platform to TIAs relating to the renewed Europe 2020 FIs. As shown in a consultation of the SMN on the 'Assessment of Territorial Impact', a majority of respondents considered that such assessment should be made compulsory for policies being more susceptible of having a territorial impact. Moreover, some respondents considered that EU 2020 objectives could be taken as a guide to determine which policies should involve a TIA.[139] The Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform could consult its members on these issues in order to reinforce the analysis of LRAs in impact assessments.

Moreover, in the Athens Declaration, the Bureau of the CoR asks that the 'progress of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy is monitored in a structured way in partnership by all relevant stakeholders, first of all the different levels of government, including sub-national governments.' This monitoring of the implementation of the renewed Europe 2020 Strategy by the LRAs could be undertaken by the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform.

Finally, another possible avenue to future developments for the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform may be to develop expert group-based policy advice within the context of the forthcoming mid-term review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Pursuant to this view, the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform could focus on specific topics with specialized views expressed by experts. For instance, subgroupings could be suggested for each of the renewed Europe 2020 FIs Initiatives. This view corresponds to one of the general trends advocated in this study, namely that it might be more beneficial to use the Platform as a means to gather more specialized views in specific subtopics. This would also allow the Platform and the members to increase their influence in the European decision-making process. The LRAs are closely involved with the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular since they are generally the ones implementing the policies. Hence, their opinions and grievances should feed back into the decision-making process.

Another challenge faced by the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform concerns the communication/interaction between the Platform members and the CoR. It has been requested by several members to transform the Platform in a more lively manner with an online forum where members could exchange information, good practices in an interactive manner.

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[139] Report on the consultation of the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network: Assessment of Territorial Impact, rapporteur Mr Michael Schneider (DE/EPP), p. 6.

Moreover, the Platform could be further involved in the pre-legislative phase, via the TIAs and the Outlook Opinions or Prospective Opinions. As mentioned *supra*, the methodology of TIAs still has to be refined by the CoR and this process could provide for an interesting opportunity to further involve the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform.

Pursuant to the surveyed Platform members, the main areas for reform are the impact on the work of the CoR, the visibility of the Platform and the interactions between its members, as depicted below (see figure 10).
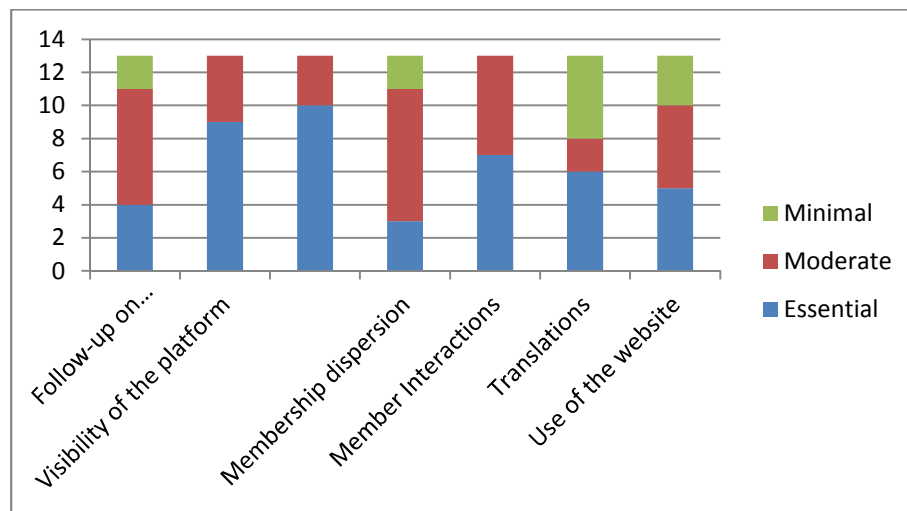

Figure 10: Need for reform of the different aspects

3.6.3.2 EGTC Platform

The Platform on EGTC is clearly working well. This view is shared with the registered contacts of the Platform.

However, in our opinion, it is time for the Platform to leave the embryonic phase and mature into a Platform that could inform and support European decision-making to a larger extent. Of course, the maturing process can only take place when a few challenges are addressed. In addition to the common challenges presented in point 3.6.1, a number of specific challenges may be raised in relation to the EGTC Platform:

- Some participants in the survey indicated that they would greatly appreciate a section on the daily business of running an EGTC. This section could provide more information for aspiring members on the changes that they can expect after establishing an EGTC. Although the EGTC is becoming a rather well know legal entity, this would render it more easily for border-regions to actually make the step to establishing an EGTC.

- The information sharing along the Platform members should be strengthened. This would allow the registered contacts to work more closely together, and hence bring common issues more easily to the attention of the European legislators. For this reason, the establishment of topical subgroups could be promoted.

- It has been proposed by some of the surveyed registered contacts to develop an online Platform to share best practices. Due to time constraints, it is not always possible to attend the meetings. One idea to overcome this problem would be to further develop web streaming.

In the EGTC Platform, the governance is not as structured and sophisticated as in the two other platforms/network analyzed in this study. This may constitute an issue for instance in terms of visibility. As mentioned *supra*, the Subsidiarity Steering Group regularly informs the relevant Commissions of the CoR about the findings and the progress of the Subsidiarity Work Programme. There is no corresponding mechanism in the EGTC Platform. Moreover, in the two other platforms/network analyzed in this study, the results of consultations are validated either by the Task Force and the Steering Committee as far was the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform is concerned and by the Subsidiarity Steering Group in the SMN. There is no corresponding mechanism in the EGTC.

In the Opinion CdR 371/2011, the rapporteur Mr M. Delebarre (FR/EPP) considered that the work of the EGTC Platform had to be continued so that EGTCs could be monitored and exchanges could take place regarding best practices and challenges. A greater use could be made of EGTCs in the EU's sectoral policies. Moreover, he suggested the EGTC Platform could be given a role similar to that of the urban development Platform proposed by the Commission in its proposal for a regulation on the European Regional Development Fund. This Platform was proposed to foster both the dialogue and the exchange on urban policy at the European level. However, it was opposed by the MEPs and consequently never established in practice.

The registered contacts were surveyed on the necessities of reform. From their responses (see graph below), one can clearly see that the respondents feel the reforms are most needed when dealing with the interactions between members, the impact on the work of the CoR, the visibility of the Platform and the use of the website. Less essential reforms include the follow-up on contributions to the Platform, the membership dispersion and the translations.
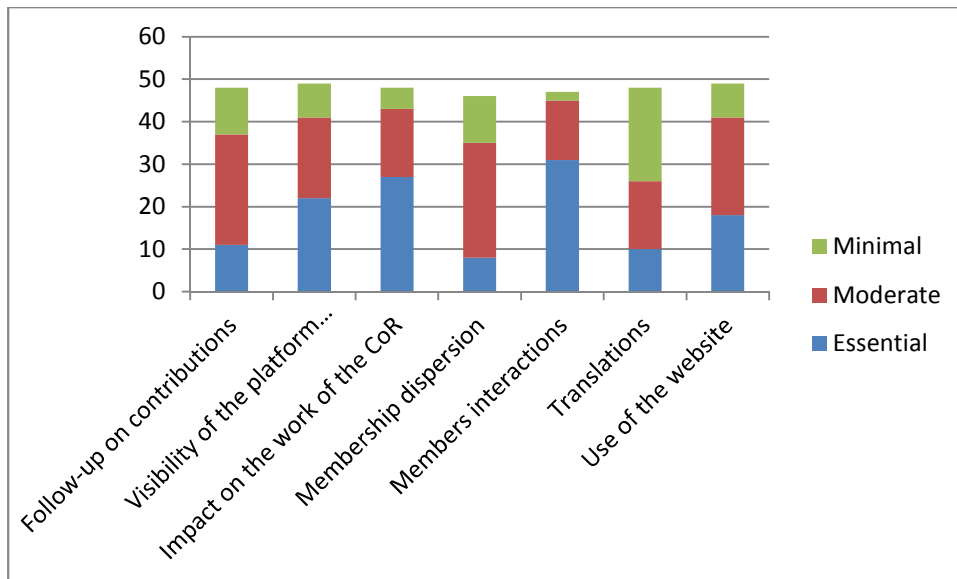
Figure 19: Need for reform of the different aspects

In general, it has been put forward that now the time has come for the Platform to get out of its initial start-up phase. This has already been translated in practice with the conduct of several consultations in 2014, as explained in point 3.2.5. This allows the CoR to more actively use the Platform to reinforce its role in the EU legislative process.

The creation of thematic subgroups for EGTCs focusing on similar issues within the EGTC Platform has also been put forward by Platform participants as a useful addition. One could indeed imagine a division following topics relating to cross-border cooperation and challenges faced by EGTCs. However, at first sight, such system seems unlikely to be transposed in practice because of the specificities of the EGTCs.

3.6.3.3 SMN

The activities of the CoR in the field of subsidiarity have been increasingly recognized both by the European Commission and the European Parliament as a valuable contribution to better law making.[140]

The SMN is generally well-perceived and it provides for valuable input in relation to subsidiarity monitoring. The CoR supports the SMN and strives to keep the website up-to-date, foster qualitative contributions and try to involve more partners. Yet, in the end, it is for the SMN partners to decide whether or not they want to go for it.

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[140] See the European Commission 2013 Annual Report on Subsidiarity and Proportionality mentioned above and the European Parliament Resolution on Better Legislation of 2012 of 28 January 2014 on EU Regulatory Fitness and Subsidiarity and Proportionality.

Yet, the SMN is also facing challenges. In addition to the common challenges identified in point 3.6.1, additional challenges may be raised, as the systematization of the subsidiarity analysis on the basis of the expertise accumulated within the SMN. Such systematization may contribute to improving the quality and efficiency of the subsidiarity check by SMN partners. Furthermore, the SMN faces the challenge that the subsidiarity analysis may be conducted in a slightly different way in each country on the basis of different cultural, technical or even organizational approaches. Added to the linguistic differences between its partners, these factors may hinder the exchange of information and the interaction among the partners of the SMN.

In its contribution in view of the 20th anniversary of the CoR submitted in January 2014, the Subsidiarity Steering Committee has summarized the challenges that remain for the future. One of the most fundamental challenges faced by the SMN consists in the time constraints in the context of the Early Warning Mechanism (eight weeks), as well as the reluctance of national parliaments to consult regional parliaments, which renders involvement of the latter particularly difficult. In order to address these challenges, the Steering Committee suggests a number of possible ways, which include *inter alia*: '[e]xpending the role of the CoR within the pre-legislative phase by combining the subsidiarity monitoring of EU initiatives with an analysis of their potential territorial impact. As part of its efforts to reinforce its involvement in the pre-legislative phase, the CoR needs to refine a Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) methodology and implement the TIA Strategy in cooperation with the Commission, the European Parliament and other relevant stakeholders.' The interesting proposal joins the general statement made *supra* in relation to the potential of the three platforms/network in the pre-legislative phase. It should be noted in this regard that TIAs and subsidiarity may overlap in certain cases. A better coordination between these assessments/monitoring could strengthen the overall message and outcome of these processes.

Interestingly, the Steering Committee adds '[e]xtending the role of the CoR in the EU post-legislative scrutiny by providing input to the European Commission's Regulatory Fitness Programme.' This post-legislative phase could indeed provide for an interesting avenue in which the SMN could be associated in the examination of the implementation of EU legislation with regard to subsidiarity.

Among the other suggestions, one may highlight the '[f]urther strengthening the subsidiarity scrutiny of CoR opinions by reinforcing the cooperation between CoR rapporteurs, CoR thematic commissions and the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network'. Indeed, the cooperation between rapporteurs, commissions and the SMN has to be fostered. The idea of better associating the rapporteurs to the

meetings of the platforms which are relevant to CoR Opinions may be explored in view of future developments of the SMN.

Finally, the Steering Group suggests '[f]urther engaging in the inter-institutional debate on subsidiarity monitoring with all key stakeholders (Council, European Parliament, Commission, national parliaments, regional parliaments and executives) in order to exchange experiences and refine the understanding of the subsidiarity principle.'

Vis-à-vis regional parliaments and executives, the CoR may provide additional training to the SMN partners to increase their awareness and expertise in subsidiarity. It may also encourage SMN partners to visit each other and to observe how other members deal with subsidiarity monitoring on the ground. Moreover, it may wish to establish an informal forum where partners could exchange best practices. Further collaboration with CALRE shall also be supported to foster synergies.

In order to improve the follow-up of SMN consultations, it has been suggested to streamline procedures and to ask the rapporteur to reply when the rapporteur neglects the subsidiarity analysis of a partner. Yet, as developed supra, the authors of this study refute such systematic obligation for rapporteurs still this would run counter the political aspect of the subsidiarity monitoring process and the general feature of the CoR being a political institution in which such decisions should be left to the CoR Members.

The SMN partners may also improve the relevance of the SMN through following means:

- refining their contributions;
- justifying their positions with evidence;
- clarifying the source of the contribution and whose views it represents;
- representing certain areas of specialization.

It has been put forward by one interviewee that the evidence produced by the SMN should be better promoted. Some reports produced by the SMN should be treated as expert reports issued by local and regional authorities. It has been suggested that the CoR could publish these reports as technical reports in annexes to its Opinions. As such, the technical reports would be independent. Yet, in guarantee the quality of these reports and of the evidence put forward therein, one could imagine a clear set of guidelines through which the CoR Secretariat would check the evidence submit it to 'healthy scepticism'.

Pursuant to the surveyed SMN partners (see figure 29), the main areas for reform are the impact on the work of the CoR, the follow-up on contributions, the visibility of the SMN and the interactions between its partners, as depicted on the graph below.
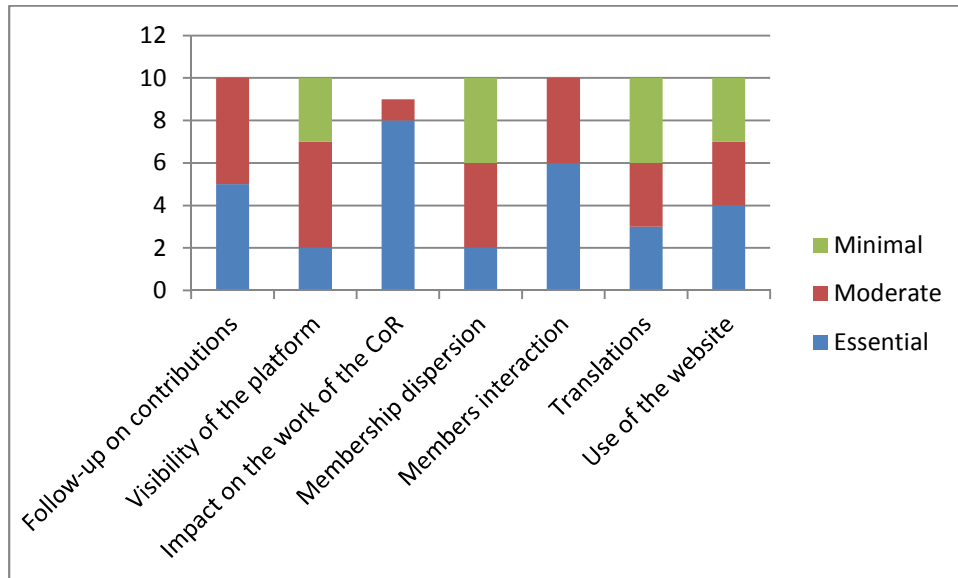

Figure 29: Need for reform of the different aspects (n= 10)

A comparable argument was suggested in relation to the SMN, where a member of the Subsidiarity Expert Group suggested that certain SMN partners could focus on a specific field of competence to assess subsidiarity. Hence, these members would act as 'champions towards constituencies'.

4. Conclusions

In general, one may conclude that the ambitions of the three platforms/network analyzed in this study are twofold since they aim (a) to feed their results into the CoR political work and support its activities and (b) to offer these results to the LRAs.

As far as the first aspect is concerned, the three platforms/network are facing a common problematic, namely the tight timing of the legislative process. In practice, one may deplore that the consultation process may be too lengthy for the results to be taken into consideration. The two platforms and the network have to be proactive. In this view, it is of tremendous importance that the agendas of the different platforms/network and the CoR are more integrated and take better into consideration the agenda of other EU institutions. More often than not, the lack of information deters the platforms/network and the CoR of being able to timely consult their members on the issues. But even within the CoR, certain issues where the platform/network can have some impact should be flagged as early as possible in the process.

The specialization into specific thematic clusters may speed up the process and consequently increase the platforms/network's efficiency. The division of the platforms/network in thematic working groups may constitute an efficient mechanism to enhance the quality of analysis on specific subtopics, sectors or thematic clusters and allow closer cooperation/exchange of ideas between the members. While the SMN already organizes regular Thematic Subsidiarity Workshops, one could suggest a division of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform into working groups following each of the renewed Europe 2020 FIs, provided that the suggestions of Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform in the 'Blueprint for a renewed Europe 2020 Strategy' are taken into consideration and that the FIs are consequently revised. As far as the EGTC Platform is concerned, the creation of subgroups could eventually follow a number of common topics related to cross-border cooperation, even if such division seems less plausible in the field of EGTCs which each have their own specificities.

In general, the strengthening of the links between CoR rapporteurs, CoR members and the platforms/network shall be fostered to increase the visibility of the platforms/network. For instance, it has been suggested to better associate the rapporteur to the meetings of the platforms which are relevant to CoR Opinions. This is especially interesting for the SMN but could also be put forward for the two other platforms. Moreover, the system established within the SMN following which the Subsidiarity Steering Group is regularly informing the

relevant CoR Commissions about the findings and the progress of the Subsidiarity Work Programme in their specific fields in order to receive their feedback and to ensure a coherent and reactive process shall be fostered and promoted to the two other platforms. This task could be assigned to the Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform and to the political coordinator in the EGTC Platform.

In addition to their involvement into the legislative consultative process of the CoR, the platforms/network analyzed in this study may also develop their potential in the pre-legislative phase. As mentioned in the Cooperation Agreement between the European Commission and the CoR,[141] 'the Committee's platforms and networks may provide a good access point to regional and local authorities and could therefore enable the Commission to reinforce the analysis of regional and local aspects in impact assessments if deemed necessary.' It should also be recalled that the CoR may issue Prospective Opinions on future European policies or Outlook Opinions. Such Outlook Opinions may be requested by the European Commission to feed its upstream preparations for EU draft legislation. Given that the time limit for CoR consultations is not as strict in the pre-legislative phase, the involvement of the platforms/network in the pre-legislative activities of the CoR may be further developed.

In relation to the second aspect, namely to offer the results of the platforms/network to their members, the platforms/network shall strengthen the exchange of information and develop more personal contacts with the LRAs' contact persons. The creation of a database of contact persons of the platforms/network members, as was already one with REGPEX may be suggested in this view.

In general, it is noted by surveyed members that the platforms/network should be more interactive. The platforms/network administrators have tried to enhance this interaction by using social media tools, as the creation of a LinkedIn group for instance. Other social networks, as Twitter and Facebook could also help the platforms/network members to increase short discussions and information sharing. An alternate possibility would be to the establish an additional informal forum where registered members could express their views in a more lively manner.

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[141]   Protocol on the cooperation between the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, R/CdR 39/2012 item 7:
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:102:0006:0010:EN:PDF.

Moreover, one may observe that the functionality of the website plays a central role for its members. The website should be user-friendly and frequently updated with new uploaded documents available as soon as possible for the other members. A logical division of sub-sections and an elimination of repetitive content may help to achieve these objectives.

Another central issue is the problem of translations. The CoR provides a systematic translation, but only for selected files given that it is impossible for the CoR to provide such full-length translations of all observations submitted for budgetary reasons. As a response to this problem, the CoR has chosen to develop a standard form in English on SMN/REGPEX on which they can indicate the most important information. Yet, this standard form is not really used. The SMN partners should be encouraged to use this standard form in order to facilitate and speed up the exchange of information. Other possible solutions would be for the CoR to provide for summary translations or cooperate with the members for translations.

The relation between the CoR platforms/network and the European Parliament could also be improved. In the framework of the Agreement with the European Parliament, new opportunities and synergies should be explored (e.g. studies). In addition, the platforms/network members could strive to promote the platforms/network and the issues discussed in bringing these issues more to the attention of the members' respective MEPs.

The platforms/network allow the CoR to reinforce its unique expertise on a rich and continuous feed of quantitative and qualitative data that back up the arguments defended in the CoR Opinions in the monitoring of the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy at the regional and local level, within territorial cross-border cooperation and in the field of subsidiarity monitoring. Although the three platforms/network are generally well functioning, addressing these challenges will increase the CoR's impact on the EU decision-making process. This would in turn increase the platforms/network members' satisfaction, who might feel more compelled to provide higher quality contributions, leading to a spiral of positive spill-overs.

5. Survey on the Europe 2020 Platform, the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN) and the Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

Page 1. Introduction

Over the years, several platforms, networks and expert groups have been set up to reinforce the work of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), such as the **Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform**, the **Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN)** and the **Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)**. These Platforms and network have evolved since then and now it is time to take stock.

The CoR has asked the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies (University of Leuven) for suggestions on how to improve its existing platforms' effectiveness, visibility and political impact for the benefit of the local and regional authorities in the EU. Hence, we organize this **online consultation for the members of the platforms/network**. If your institution belongs to more than one Platform/network out of the three aforementioned, may we please ask you to fill in **one questionnaire per platform/network**? Completing this online consultation will take **less than 5 minutes**. Also, please feel free to complete the questions requiring further developments in your own language. Thank you very much for your participation!

The survey is open until **30 November 2014**. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by phone (+32 16 32 52 17 – Mr Pierre Schmitt) or by email at COR@ggs.kuleuven.be.

Page 2. Details of respondent

1. **Please indicate your full name (first name and surname)**

2. **Please indicate your position**

3. **Please indicate the name of your institution**

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4. Please select the platform/network for which you are completing the survey

☐ Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform
☐ Subsidiarity Monitoring Network (SMN)
☐ Platform of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

Page 3. Evaluation of the contributions of the current platform to the activities of the CoR

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5. Can you please rank the objectives listed hereafter that motivated your participation in the network/platform?
   Please select one answer per row.

	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not relevant
Address challenges in the implementation of European policies, strategies, etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase the visibility of your institution	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increase your impact on the political work of the CoR	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interact with other members of the platform/network	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exchange information with the CoR	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Very important	Important	Not so important	Not relevant
EU project partner search	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other, please specify:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Page 4. Evaluation of the contributions of the current platform to the activities of the CoR

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6. **Please indicate your degree of satisfaction with the platform (on a scale from 1 to 5) and indicate how possible shortcomings could be addressed in your view:**

   1 = very unsatisfied
   2 = unsatisfied
   3 = neutral
   4 = satisfied
   5 = very satisfied

General functioning of the platform

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Suggestions for improvement:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Follow-up on your contributions to the platform/network

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Suggestions for improvement:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Visibility of the platform/network

1	2	3	4	5
▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

Suggestions for improvement:

Impact of the platform/network on the political work of the CoR

1	2	3	4	5
▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

Suggestions for improvement:

Geographical distribution of members

1	2	3	4	5
▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

Suggestions for improvement:

Interaction between the members of the platform/network

1	2	3	4	5
▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

Suggestions for improvement:

Translations into your language*

1	2	3	4	5
▢	▢	▢	▢	▢

Suggestions for improvement:

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*Please specify your language:

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Usability of the website

	1	2	3	4	5
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Suggestions for improvement:

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Page 5. Evaluation of the contributions of the current platform to the activities of the CoR

7. **In order to improve the functioning of the platform/network, which features should be reformed with priority to meet your expectations? Please select one answer per row.**

	Essential (should get priority)	Moderate (should be revised but no priority)	Minimal (should not be revised)
Follow-up on your contribution to the platform/network	☐	☐	☐
Visibility of the platform	☐	☐	☐
Impact on the political work of the CoR	☐	☐	☐
Membership dispersion	☐	☐	☐
Interaction between the	☐	☐	☐

	Essential (should get priority)	Moderate (should be revised but no priority)	Minimal (should not be revised)
members of the platform/network			
Translations into your language	☐	☐	☐
Usability of the website	☐	☐	☐

Page 6. Evaluation of the contributions of the current platform to the activities of the CoR

8. **If you have any further suggestions on how the platform/network could be improved, please express them in the following box.**

[text box]

Page 7. Evaluation of the contributions of the current platform to the activities of the CoR

9. **Do you agree to be contacted for further consultation on the issues covered in this questionnaire? Please click the box corresponding to your answer and, depending on your answer, add your contact details.**

[dropdown box]

Contact details:

[text box]

Page 8. End

Thank you for your cooperation.