Summary First Workshop RegHub 31 January 2019 at the CoR

[Work document]

Opening of the workshop

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, CoR President, opened the workshop and underlined the strategic importance of this project for the future of the CoR. He reminded the participants that through this pilot project the CoR concretely tests the new approach to active subsidiarity and that further integrating the regional dimension in the European decision making is of substantial added value for the European project. This pilot project is the starting point to create a valuable instrument for this purpose.

Thomas Wobben, Director Directorate C Legislative Work, recalled the importance of this project for the CoR as it fills an existing gap between the different levels of policy-making. This systematic feedback mechanism can help to better understand how EU legislations work on the ground. In that sense, it is part of a broader EU objective for less but better regulation. This is the first project put into action after the EU's Task Force on subsidiarity and in that context the goal is to make sure that its approach is taken into account in this European legislative review process.

Presentation of the network by the RegHub team

Rainer Steffens, RegHub project coordinator, started the session by presenting the members of the RegHub team. He explained how after a successful call for applications, the CoR has decided to select 20 core hubs and 17 associated hubs and focused on some specific points of the network activities such as the role of the hubs, the working method and the political governance.

Rafael Mondelaers, RegHub policy officer, continued the presentation by setting out the four main aspects of the Code of Conduct: the role of the CoR and the RegHub team, the role of the contact points and the hubs, the membership and the general governance**.**

Gaëlle Chaillet, RegHub trainee, presented a few practicalities on the communication activities of the network. Based on the four traditional channels of communication, the promotional objectives of the network are twofold: establish an efficient internal discussion and platform for exchange of practices between workshops; boost the external visibility of the project's progress at both the regional and EU level.

- **Twitter** will be used as an external communication tool to gain the attention of the EC as well as to present, one by one, the selected regions and hubs.
- **LinkedIn** could be used as an internal forum/platform to post, share and comment in-between the workshops and during the consultations.
- **Press articles** will be collected in order to observe the visibility of the project.

- **Webpage and member's page** will be launched in March during the Bucharest Summit.

Interactive session

What is key for a successful consultation?

- **Ambition, Leadership, Commitment and Determination** are personality traits that need to be present in the individuals in charge of the consultation in order to ensure an efficient functioning at all stages (especially if the subject is technical) and an impactful follow-up. The organizer need to keep in mind the final goal of the consultation: get the results to influence and change the decision-making process and the content of the regulation.
- **A two-way trust** between the consultant and consultee in order to receive quality and timely information from key stakeholders and do the maximum to channel this feedback to the relevant decision-makers. Consultations should not be elaborated with pre-determined answers in mind or to confirm an already-written legislation.
- **The existing need** to influence and change a policy can be evident and clear before the consultation as well as after. By collecting different individual experiences, a broader overview of the need of the region can be elaborated.
- A **basis of knowledge** and **practical experience** is necessary to commit to a **constant learning and improvement process** by exchanging and discovering good practices.
- An **opened internal discussion** is key to ensure that different dimension from the regions are taken into account (e.g. rich towns versus poor rural areas).
- In order to get a **constant participation and high presence** in the **network,** a **bottom-up process** is crucial to reach the actors on the ground implementing policies and to overcome the frustration that the decision-making process cannot be influenced. It also important to an efficient coordination team keeping in contact with local and national actors and drafting concrete questions. **Internal cooperation** with the **end user or stakeholder needs to be inclusive to everyone.** The simplification of policies does not mean nationalization but better regional integration.
- **Cross-border cooperation** between regions within a same country or between countries is key to increase the influence of the consultation. International cooperation faces obstacles but also offer the opportunity to be stronger together. With the same problems, the regions can have the same ambitions.
- An original and proactive **external communication** is necessary to gain visibility at different levels of government, receive an official answer to the consultation and **get your position heard.**

Conclusion: The network should aim to bridge the gaps between LRAs and the EU and address frustrations in LRA caused by difficulties to have an impact on EU policy.

Round up of the Q&A session on the working method

1. **Consultation method:** each hub will send back one questionnaire for each consultation round, but with possibility in the questionnaire to develop and to explain different responses from

stakeholders; the consultation should allow for the hubs to target specific questions of the questionnaire to some specific stakeholders when appropriate and provide user friendly dissemination tools to target the stakeholders; also the questions will be as practical and concrete as possible and the RegHub team will provide the necessary technical support and advice to the contact points

2. **Policy topics selection:** the topics selected for consultation as mentioned in the work programme have been selected on the basis of the relevant institutional timelines and the significance of the topics for LRA's. Other additional topics suggested by the hubs that meet the same criteria will be taken into consideration and if possible and appropriate a consultation on such policies will be launched.

3. **Timelines for consultations:** each timeline for the consultations will depend on practical constraints and the relevant institutional legislative review processes (Commission's review, EP monitoring etc.) to maximise the chances of the impact of the implementation report.

4. **Exchange best practices:** during the next workshops the network will provide the opportunity for its members to exchange ideas and best practices on how to organise and set up their hub in practice, with its own network of relevant stakeholders and consultation methods and platforms.

First topic for consultation – Public Procurement (PP)

Effrosyni Kossyvaki, CoR Policy Officer on PP, started her presentation by placing the RegHub consultation in the broader work of the CoR and went on by explaining why PP was chosen as the first topic for the RegHub consultation. She mentioned the opportunities and the challenges and concerns heard in previous consultations on strategic procurement. She also described why it is important to look at the implementation framework. The growth opportunities opened with 2014 directives cannot materialize without the proper implementation of the legislation. The main objective of the first RegHub consultation is to identify the key challenges of LRAs in implementing the new provisions of the directives, the most frequent sources of wrong application and legal uncertainty in the context of the cohesion funds, the main obstacles encountered by LRAs in facilitating the participation of SMEs in PP (including start-ups and scale-ups), identify and disseminate best practices on how to overcome these obstacles.

Katharina Knapton-Vierlich, Head of Unit (acting), European Commission, DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (G.1 Public Procurement Strategy), mentioned how the 2014 directives have had two years to be transposed into national law and how implementation is hitting the road at the local and regional level right now. Hence, it is according to her the perfect time to learn about local experiences. The feedback should focus on what went wrong and whet went well in order to focus on measures to help with the implementation and build partnerships within member states. Such a measures package consists of 6 priorities: PP as a strategic tool, professionalisation of public procurers, better access to procurement for SMEs, transparency and integrity data, digital transformation and procurement in innovative ways on the basis of needs and facts. Regarding the stakeholders to be consulted she advised not only to focus on the entities who buy but also on the regional actors who want to sell. She concluded on the importance of RegHub, for the Commission, in order to increase their number of contact points beyond the member state level. The other way round she recalled the two-way function of the partnerships with the Commission: "better to talk before doing an error".

Paraskevi Chavaki, European Parliament, secretariat of Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), explained how PP is seen as a core area of the internal market legislation by the EP and that is dealt with mostly by its IMCO Committee. In that context she recalled that the role of the EP is twofold: it not only legislates but it also monitors the implementation of legislation. Furthermore, she acknowledged the relevance of the RegHub consultation for the European Parliament's work in the implementation of PP legislation.