RegHub

Code of conduct for the pilot phase (2019-2020)

1   Scope

The scope of this document is to establish what is expected of the contact points of the Network of Regional Hubs for EU Policy Implementation Review (hereafter also: "RegHub" or "network"), both those representing the hubs (hereafter also: "members") in the core group and in the associate group, and what the role of the Committee of the Regions (hereafter: "CoR") will be during RegHub's pilot phase (2019-2020).

The network is an initiative of the CoR and membership is purely voluntary, therefore this is not a legally binding document. Rather, it aims at providing practical guidelines that will help the network run smoothly and efficiently and to achieve its goals within the framework set out by the CoR Bureau in its decision of 8 October 2018 (hereafter: "Bureau Decision").

However, the goals of the network can only be achieved if the selected members and their contact points live up to the content of their applications. Indeed, the selection of the members is the result of a thorough analysis of the large number of applications by the competent bodies of the CoR. They took into account the abilities, competences and the political commitment of the future members so as to make sure that the network will produce politically relevant output of the highest quality. This ambition stands or falls with members living up to these expectations and taking up this responsibility when it comes to their involvement in the network.

2   Mission and objectives of RegHub

During the pilot phase RegHub will collect the technical on the ground experiences of local and regional authorities (hereafter: "LRA") by organising consultations of the hubs. For this purpose detailed technical questionnaires on the implementation of specific policy areas will be sent out by the CoR to the contact points who will fill them in based on the information they gather from the relevant

stakeholders in the territories covered by their hub. The aim is to have at least three such consultations a year.

The CoR will compile these experiences in technically relevant high quality "implementation reports" with the ambition of using these to establish a reinforced cooperation between the CoR and the other EU institutions, as part of a revised EU Better Regulation agenda.

Thus, RegHub will underline the specific role of LRAs in a system of multi-level governance in Europe, with a better assessment of what EU action is needed in the future in a given policy field.

3 Membership of RegHub

Being part of RegHub during its pilot phase is a unique opportunity for the involved LRAs to be at the heart of this new project. It will allow them to be among the very first LRAs that will have the chance to put "active subsidiarity" in EU policy making into practice and give the EU institutions their very own feedback on the implementation of existing EU policies that are relevant to them.

It also entails an important responsibility as they will shape the network during its pilot phase and their involvement will be a key factor for success. This requires them to live up to their political commitment to be part of RegHub and to give the network an appropriate visibility within their territories and beyond.

4 Role of the CoR

The CoR will:

- ensure the day-to-day management and coordination of the network through its RegHub secretariat;

- draft and decide upon a work programme at the start of each year, including proposals for the policy areas on which consultations are organised;

- draft the questionnaires for the consultations and compile the answers into an implementation report.

- ensure the follow up and proper dissemination of the implementation reports. It will use the implementation reports to strengthen the CoR's legislative work and share it in the largest possible

manner with the other EU institutions. It will contact and collaborate with the relevant services of the other EU institutions, with the aim of making RegHub an efficient feedback mechanism through which the implementation reports will give the EU's LRAs a relevant and significant voice in the EU's better regulation mechanisms and review processes of existing legislation.

The CoR will provide the following logistical support for the functioning of the network:

- organise and provide the logistics for the workshops (3 a year), including the expenses for speakers;

- provide assistance to the RegHub members for the good functioning of the network;

- run the network's website and digital consultation platform;

- design, develop and implement the communication strategy of the network. Where and when appropriate it will instruct the members and contact points on how they should communicate on their role in RegHub and its activities.

5 Role of the contact points

Unless specified otherwise, throughout this document "contact point" refers to both the contact points of the core group and the associate group.

The contact points of the network are expected to:

- attend and actively take part in the workshops of the network. The workshops will last one or two days at the most. The contact points that are present will have the opportunity to discuss the policy areas that are up for consultation and the result of previous consultations. They are also invited to give their input on and make suggestions for the working methods of the network;

- attend and actively take part in any other meetings or events organised in the context of the network;

- inform the CoR as soon as possible if its hub wishes to substitute its contact point for a specific task or replace it temporarily or permanently. The substituting or replacing contact point should also be a member of staff of a local or regional administration covered by the contact point's hub. The good functioning of the network requires continuity in the designation of the contact points and the hubs should therefore strive only to substitute or replace their contact point when absolutely necessary;

- identify, set up and update when appropriate a network of relevant stakeholders that can be contacted for the consultations. The success of the RegHub will depend on the capacity of the hubs to collect the relevant technical feedback in a timely manner from these stakeholders for filling in the questionnaires of the consultations. In view of this, the hubs can, as appropriate and relevant, involve (and partner up) with associations of regional and local authorities for all, or specific, tasks. The quality of the answers will be a key factor for the relevance of the consultations and thus the success of the network. It is therefore imperative that the contact points fill in the questionnaires objectively and impartially, solely basing themselves on the technical data and information they obtain from all the consulted stakeholders;

- fill in the questionnaires for the consultations properly, based upon the feedback obtained from the relevant stakeholders and with clear and comprehensible drafted answers. Whenever the contact points include information obtained from stakeholders in their answers to the questionnaires of the consultations, they should mention their stakeholders' official name and contact details for reference purposes. In general all answers in the filled in questionnaires should provide as many references as possible for their content. The questionnaires will contain guidance for filling them in and the contact points should follow these guidelines;

- respect the consultation deadlines communicated by the CoR. These will often be linked to administrative procedures, political timetables and interinstitutional agendas. Therefore, if deadlines are not respected, the CoR cannot guarantee to take into account the input from the members that do not meet the deadlines;

- mention their membership of RegHub in external communication appropriately use the RegHub branding in concertation with the CoR;

- whenever appropriate spread information about the Better Regulation activities of the EU to their stakeholders and act as an information point for the activities of RegHub in the territory covered by their hub.

6   Governance

RegHub is a CoR initiative and therefore its members and contact points must comply with the applicable CoR rules and procedures in their activities and doings related to the network. The

governance of the network will be ensured by the competent bodies of the CoR and all relevant decisions will be taken by them.

In accordance with the Bureau Decision, the Bureau will thus adopt the work programme at the beginning of each year, upon proposal of the Subsidiarity Steering Group of the CoR (hereafter: "SSG").

However, as the network is in its pilot phase and the objective is for it to be a feedback mechanism through which the involved LRAs can produce relevant technical feedback for the EU institutions, the opinions and the suggestions of its members are essential for it to function in the most optimal way.

That is why the members will have the opportunity to discuss, make suggestions and come up with proposals regarding the content of the work programme, of the consultation questionnaires and of the implementation reports in accordance with what follows.

The work programme will among others contain the policy areas on which RegHub will organise consultations and the timetable for related actions. The policy areas and related timeframes will be identified by the secretariats of the CoR commissions and included in the draft work programme.The contact points of the network are invited to discuss these at the workshops of the network. Any suggestions from the members on potential policy areas that can be selected for consultations are welcome.

The RegHub secretariat will transmit these suggestions to CoR commission secretariats under whose remit the suggested policy area falls. The CoR commission secretariats will evaluate these suggestions of the contact points and when deemed fit for purpose, propose for them to be included in the draft work programme. However, given that the network is in its pilot phase and has restricted means, only a limited number of policy areas can be taken into consideration for consultation.

Regarding the content of the questionnaires for consultation and the implementation reports, the input from the network members is also most cherished. For this purpose, the draft of these documents will be prepared by the RegHub secretariat and the involved CoR commission secretariats, taking into account the conclusions of the relevant workshops of the network. Subsequently the drafts will be made available in a timely manner to the network members on the digital consultation platform of the network, where they can propose improvements.

The RegHub secretariat will submit proposals that are carried by a significant number of network members to the relevant bodies of the CoR that are in charge of the political governance of the network. They will take these suggestions into utmost account.

7 Possible replacement of a contact point or a hub

RegHub can only be successful in its pilot phase if all contact points and hubs fully participate in the activities. The political commitment of the selected applicants should guarantee their active participation and therefore only in exceptional circumstances can replacements be envisaged.

Should a contact point not manage to fully participate in the activities of the network or only in a very limited manner, the CoR will envisage possible ways to remediate in order to increase its level of activity. If necessary, the CoR will discuss the contact point's replacement with its hub.

If appropriate a hub's contact point can be permanently replaced by another person fulfilling the same criteria as the contact point he or she is replacing. Any intention to replace a contact point should be discussed well in advance with the CoR in order to assess its feasibility.

Should a contact point or a hub systematically infringe this code of conduct the CoR will suspend its membership of the network for a reasonable period of time. If this concerns a member of the core group, the CoR will be able to replace this contact point of the core group during the suspension with a contact point of the associate group. Contact points of associate group members will not be replaced.

In case a hub wishes to cancel its membership of the network altogether it can do so at any time by informing the CoR and with a notice period of at least 3 months, during which the outgoing member will retain all of its duties. The CoR can agree to a shorter notice period. A retraction of the notice is only valid if the CoR agrees with it.

Any ongoing consultation at the expiration of the notice remains the responsibility of the outgoing member unless the CoR agrees otherwise. They will therefore be expected to properly fill in the related questionnaire and send it back to the CoR before the deadline expires.

If the cancellation of membership concerns a member of the core group, the CoR will be able to replace this member with a member of the associate group. Associate group members will not be replaced.

8   Financial aspects and reimbursements

The CoR will provide reimbursement of travel and accommodation cost for the workshops for core group members. For every workshop only one contact point for each hub that is member of the core group is eligible for reimbursement of his or her travel and accommodation costs. This reimbursement is subject to the applicable CoR rules.

The CoR will not provide financing of the day to day functioning of the hubs or the contact points, which will be financed by the participating LRAs exclusively.

9   Language management

The working language will be English. However, the questionnaires for the consultations will be translated into the languages of the participating hubs and the workshops will have interpretation.

Since the CoR will only be able to provide interpretation to certain languages of the hubs for meetings and events, it is strongly desirable that the contact points have sufficient working knowledge of English. This will also facilitate the contacts and interaction with the CoR staff and between the members themselves as well as the work of the network in general.