

The Co-Chairs

Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)

Activity Report 2014-2015

This summary reports on CORLEAP activities, as noted in the CORLEAP Action Plan 2014-2015, on related conferences and political events and on relevant publications and studies commissioned in support of those activities.

Training for representatives of the LRAs from EaP countries on Fiscal decentralisation and territorial cooperation

7-8 April 2014, Brussels

Fiscal decentralisation and territorial cooperation continued to feature among the main political priorities of CORLEAP. The training activity was organised by CORLEAP together with the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), in the framework of cooperation between CORLEAP and the Civil Society Forum (CSF), which foresees the exchange of good practices between the EaP and EU members, especially on funding opportunities in the area of territorial cooperation and relevant instruments, such as the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The Training was attended by participants from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and also from EU countries.

Seminar on Implementation of the Vilnius summit declaration on the local level

7 April 2014, Brussels

The event was organised by CORLEAP together with ALDA for the participants of the aforementioned training programme. Representatives of CORLEAP, ALDA and civil society organisations, as well as representatives of the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) discussed about the inclusion of regional and local authorities in the implementation of Eastern Partnership (EaP) policies and further actions for targeted support and strengthening of local self-government, notably decentralisation and territorial cooperation, as well as about supporting municipal development, a multi-stakeholder approach and the engagement of citizens.

CORLEAP Bureau meeting

28 April 2014, Brussels

The CORLEAP Bureau discussed developments after the EaP Summit in Vilnius, focusing on the contribution of local and regional authorities to the readjustment of the Eastern Partnership initiative and specific CORLEAP actions.

Conference on Devolution: looking forward for reforms in EAP countries

28 April 2014, Brussels

The conference was connected to the meeting of the CORLEAP Bureau. The speakers included CoR members (Ms Mercedes Bresso, Mr Luc van den Brande, Mr Franz Schausberger), experts from partner countries and academia, who examined the state of devolution in the EaP countries and looked into the development of constitutional and other changes in the future. While there is no "best model" for a particular institutional structure or the sharing of powers between the different models of governance, EU experience shows that decentralised executives are in many policy areas more efficient and cost effective, and also more adapted to local needs. Greater differentiation between the EaP countries would have to accompany in the future a greater involvement, not only with national governments, but with society at large, notably the local and regional authorities and civil society organisations.

Presentation of the monitoring report on local and regional democracy in Armenia by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

5 June 2014, Brussels

As foreseen by the CORLEAP Action Plan for 2014-2015 and building on the positive experience regarding other countries (Azerbaijan and Ukraine), CORLEAP and the Congress organized a joint event on Armenia, inviting representatives of the CoR, CORLEAP, the Congress, the European Commission, as well as independent experts and representatives of civil society. The Congress report on Local and Regional Democracy in Armenia was adopted on 26 March 2014 and the intention was to conduct to a joint event after the adoption and link it to the CoR work (opinions on Armenia and ENP issued by the CoR; election observation mission to Armenia in 2013).

CORLEAP annual meeting

29 September 2014, Tbilisi, Georgia

The CORLEAP annual meeting looked at decentralisation and local self-government, and at territorial cooperation between territorial authorities in partner countries and the EU cities and regions. Members reiterated their support for the inclusion of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the relevant EaP policies and encouraged the representatives of national associations of LRAs to enhance their contribution. The main political outcome was the approval of the Recommendations to the Heads of State and Government gathering in Riga on May 2015 for the EaP Summit.

Conference on Funding Opportunities: Key Element for Achieving a Successful Eastern Partnership

29 September 2014, Tbilisi, Georgia

Linked to the annual meeting, the conference organised by CORLEAP together with the EIB presented the EU financial assistance available to the local and regional authorities in EaP countries in the new programming period and the relevant institutional network, as well as an overview of projects financed by the Pilot Regional Development Programme in 2011-2013 and lessons learned.

The conference also initiated a brainstorming and exchange of views among the panelists representing CORLEAP and EU officials preparing the EaP Municipal Flagship 2014-2020. Speakers: Mr Tengiz Shergelashvili, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia; Mr Gia Zhorzholiani, Parliament of Georgia; Mr Davit Jikia, President of NALAG; Ms Katica Hajrulahović, European Investment Bank; Mr Bruno Balvanera, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; Mr Rob de Lobel, DG DEVCO European Commission.

OPEN DAYS 2014 debate on Eastern Partnership territorial and parliamentary cooperation: stepping up the relations

8 October 2014, Brussels

The event was co-organised by CORLEAP and EURONEST and looked at ways of stepping up cooperation across borders with EaP countries. The conclusion was that territorial and parliamentary cooperation between actors across geographical and political boundaries in the EaP space could provide an enormous potential for meeting the wider objectives of the partnership. CORLEAP and EURONEST were the best alternative platforms for the dialogue and cooperation between authorities closest to the citizens and other actors involved in Eastern Partnership policy. It was necessary to increase the role for local and regional authorities in the implementation of EaP policies and strategies and involve more the parliamentarians. Special attention was devoted to Ukraine, which, after signing the Association Agreement with the EU, entered into a period of challenges and opportunities. Speakers: Mr Michel Lebrun, President of the CoR and Co-Chair of CORLEAP; Ms Heidi Hautala, MEP, Co-President of the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly; Mr Victor Dolidze, Chair of European Integration Committee of the Parliament of Georgia; Mr Myroslav Koshelyuk, Deputy Minister of Regional Development of Ukraine, Mr Emin Yeritsyan, co-chair of CORLEAP.

Conference on continuing vocational training in Eastern Europe: Mobilising the demand, enhancing the supply

21-23 October 2014, Chisinau, Rep. of Moldova

The conference organised by European Training Foundation (ETF) together with CORLEAP was included in the CORLEAP Action Plan for 2014/2015 as a concrete joint action in the area of regional skills that would contribute to region's socio-economic development strategy. Its main purpose was to support Eastern European countries in their decision-making processes by sharing experience and expertise in the field of vocational education training, a sector that has become a priority area in the last decade and in which a wave of sector reform was well advancing in most EaP countries. Participants drew conclusions from the ETF project "CVT in Eastern Europe" expressed ideas for sustaining the work beyond the completion of the project.

Seminar on public administration reform on local and regional level in the context of Eastern Partnership

3-7 November 2014, Prague, Czech Rep.

The Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs is organising each year a weekly training for civil servants and administrators from the local and regional governments of the EaP countries, within the Platform 1 of

the Eastern Partnership (the Czech Rep. is lead country for the topic of Public Administration Reform at Local and Regional level). Mr Petr Osvald (CZ/PES-member of CORLEAP) presented CORLEAP activities and goals.

CORLEAP annual meeting

23 April 2015, Brussels

The main topic of the CORLEAP annual meeting was administrative capacity building. Members adopted the final CORLEAP Recommendations to the Heads of State and Government gathering in Riga in May 2015 for the EaP Summit.

Conference "Supporting Municipal Development in Partner Countries"

23 April 2015, Brussels

The conference organised in the margins of the CORLEAP annual meeting was subtitled "Sparkling Change and Making the Eastern Partnership Tangible". The European Commission presented the programmes planned in support of urban/municipal development in the partner countries and the links to the existing initiatives of interest for local and regional authorities in the EaP countries. Representatives of the Covenant of Mayors initiative in the EaP region (COMO EAST), Sustainable Urban Demonstration Projects (SUDeP), European External Action Service (EEAS), European Commission (DG NEAR), EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) were among the speakers.

Opening of the Local Democracy Agency in Dnipropetrovsk (Ukraine)

18 May 2015, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) organised the inaugural event together with CORLEAP, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and other partners. A Local Democracy Agency (LDA) is a locally-registered NGO, functioning on the basis of a partnership between local and international actors. LDAs are established in the framework of the support programme of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to strengthen local democracy and human rights and promote sustainable development in line with European values. They act as promoters of democracy and local self-governance, offering an operational platform of debate, capacity building and shared cooperation between civil society and local authorities.

4th Eastern Partnership Summit

22 May 2015, Riga, Latvia

The event was organised by the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council. CORLEAP was invited and represented by Mr Karl-Heinz Lambertz, First Vice-President of the European Committee of the Regions, and Mr Emin Yeritsyan, co-chair of CORLEAP. In their joint intervention they outlined the mission of CORLEAP and main points of the recommendations for the Heads of State and Government, adopted at the CORLEAP annual meeting in April.

The Balkan and the Black Sea Area on the move: perspectives for Regional Authorities

29 May 2015, Brussels

The event was organised by the CoR and CORLEAP together with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR). It provided an update on the prospects for developing the EU's policies in the South-East of Europe and opportunities for an exchange of regional points of view in this context. Main findings pointed to the belief that the objectives of the revised ENP would be best achieved if they could rely on the mobilisation of representatives of society and citizens. The CoR and CORLEAP have a key role to play in this "division" of governance, in finding ways and means to involve them in the preparation and implementation of programmes and strategies. The seminar discussed developments in the region and prospects for LRAs – among themselves and with representatives from the European Parliament and the Commission.

EaP Panel on Public Administration Reform

4 June 2015, Stockholm, Sweden

Responsive governance at local level was the thematic focus of the EaP Panel on Public Administration Reform (PAR), organised by the EEAS together with Folke Bernadotte Academy under the framework of EaP Platform 1. CORLEAP was represented by the secretariat and participants were informed about the activities of CORLEAP and its recommendations.

CORLEAP Bureau meeting

18 September 2015, Yerevan, Armenia

The main purpose of the Bureau meeting was to discuss the outcome and impact of the EaP Summit in Riga and the CORLEAP Action Plan 2016-2017. It was hosted by the Union of Communities of Armenia, the Ministry for Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations of Armenia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

Conference on Local Democracy in the Eastern Partnership Countries: Main Issues and Ongoing Activities

18 September 2015, Yerevan, Armenia

The conference was organised back-to-back with the Bureau meeting and offered an insight into the role of local democracy and local and regional authorities in the development of the EU's Eastern Partnership, focusing on the pragmatic cooperation among the stakeholders in this policy area. In particular, the conference looked at possible synergies between CORLEAP and the Congress of the Council of Europe.

OPEN DAYS debate on Eastern Partnership Territorial and Parliamentary Cooperation: Revising the Relations, Implementing Association Agreements

13 October 2015, Brussels

Since the Vilnius Summit in 2013, the EU has signed Association Agreements with Georgia, the Rep. of Moldova and Ukraine. Those provide key means for achieving the democratic development and deep modernisation in the partner countries, in line with the expectations of their populations. The

workshop explored how the CoR (through CORLEAP) and the EP (through EURONEST) could contribute to stepping up cooperation with the partner countries in a new context. The event also looked at the outcome of the EaP Summit in Riga.

Other events where CORLEAP was represented:

- EaP foreign ministers meeting (22 July 2014, Brussels) – participation of Mr Mamuka Abuladze, CORLEAP co-chair
- EaP foreign ministers meeting (20 April 2015, Luxembourg) – participation of Mr François Decoster, member of CORLEAP and chair of CIVEX Commission of the CoR
- EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly meeting (17-20 March 2015, Yerevan) – participation of Mr Emin Yeritsyan, CORLEAP co-chair
- Conference on the Role of Municipalities in Promotion of Development Education and Research (1-4 December 2015, Tbilisi) – participation of Mr David Jikia, member of CORLEAP and President of NALAG

Publications:

- CORLEAP – Local and Regional Governments' Voice in the Eastern Partnership, October 2014
<http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/corleap/Documents/Local%20and%20Regional%20Governments%27%20Voice%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Partnership.pdf>
- EU Financial assistance available to local and regional authorities in Eastern Partnership countries, April 2015
<http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/corleap/Documents/EU%20Financial%20assistance%20in%20Eastern%20Partnership%20countries%20.pdf>

Studies:

- **Local and Regional Authorities for a Successful Eastern Partnership** – November 2014
The first part of the report discusses developments in the partner countries with regard to CORLEAP's key priority areas: (1) public administration reform; (2) fiscal decentralisation; and (3) territorial cooperation. In particular, on territorial cooperation, the descriptive analysis takes into account the existence of new instruments, such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), as well as the various means of cooperation, such as the establishment of macro-regions. It also looks forward to the implementation of the Association Agreements and the DCFTAs, exploring the potential role for LRAs in their effective implementation and how LRAs can act as a motor for economic development in the regions of the EaP using the opportunities provided by the DCFTA. The second part of this report provides an update on the EU financial assistance available to the local and

regional authorities in Eastern Partnership countries in the new programming period 2014–20 and the relevant institutional framework. It functions as a guide and gives an overview of projects financed by the Pilot Regional Development Programme in 2011–13 and the lessons learnt for LRAs. It advises on the practical steps LRAs should undertake to access the EU's funds and give strategic recommendations on increasing the participation of LRAs in dealing with EU funds among other by developing structures that would enable LRAs in partner countries be the recipient of the EU's funds.
<http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/LRA-SUCCESSFUL-EASTERN-PARTNERSHIP.pdf>

- **The Place of Local and Regional Self-Government in Eastern Partnership Policy-Making and Delivery** – September 2015

The study explores the challenges and opportunities which the new generation of Association Agreements presents for economic, political and institutional developments at the sub-national level in the six EaP countries. It also discusses the domestic structural and policy impediments to economic reforms, mapping the situation within the countries regarding the devolution and the division of competences on the one hand and the provision of adequate financial resources, through fiscal decentralisation or federalism, on the other hand.

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/The-place-LRSG-easternship.pdf>

- **The participation of entities of outside the EU in the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation** – September 2015

EGTCs are instruments for cooperation, notably at sub-national level, aimed at developing approaches for joint policy-making. The study looks at scenarios of cooperation, the state of play, challenges and trends in the different geographical areas, taking into consideration the new legal regime of participation of entities from outside the EU in EGTCs.

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/studies/Documents/EGTCs-Particip-Outside.pdf>