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| **ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT** **2016** |

Table of Contents

Impact analysis of CoR opinions in major fields of political activity

[**Methodology and interinstitutional initiatives and follow-up** 1](#_Toc486243268)

[**Analysis of the impact of CoR opinions in major fields of political activity** 5](#_Toc486243269)

[**1.** **Economic and monetary policy** 5](#_Toc486243270)

[**1.1** **Economic governance, European Semester and Economic and Monetary Union** 5](#_Toc486243271)

[**1.2** **Single Market and the sharing economy** 6](#_Toc486243272)

[**1.3** **Jobs and growth** 7](#_Toc486243273)

[**1.4** **Tourism** 8](#_Toc486243274)

[**1.5** **Entreprise and Industry** 8](#_Toc486243275)

[**2.** **Regional policy and EU budget** 10](#_Toc486243276)

[**2.1** **Investment Plan for Europe** 10](#_Toc486243277)

[**2.2** **Simplification of ESIF** 10](#_Toc486243278)

[**2.3** **EU Budget** 11](#_Toc486243279)

[**2.4** **Regional development indicators** 12](#_Toc486243280)

[**2.5** **Cross-border cooperation** 13](#_Toc486243281)

[**2.6** **Urban policy** 14](#_Toc486243282)

[**3.** **Transport and Mobility** 15](#_Toc486243283)

[**3.2** **Railway policy** 15](#_Toc486243284)

[**3.3.** **EU Ports policy** 16](#_Toc486243285)

[**4.** **Research and innovation** 17](#_Toc486243286)

[**5.** **Culture and youth** 18](#_Toc486243287)

[**6.** **Environment, Climate Change and Energy** 20](#_Toc486243288)

[**6.1** **EU Energy and climate policy** 20](#_Toc486243289)

[**6.2** **EU environment policy** 23](#_Toc486243290)

[**7.** **Natural Resources** 24](#_Toc486243291)

[**7.1** **Food policy** 24](#_Toc486243292)

[**7.2** **Rural policies** 25](#_Toc486243293)

[**7.3** **Disaster risk reduction** 25](#_Toc486243294)

[**7.4** **Future of European aquaculture** 26](#_Toc486243295)

[**8.** **Better regulation, subsidiarity and proportionality** 26](#_Toc486243296)

[**9.** **Migration, security and justice** 27](#_Toc486243297)

[**10.** **Europe as a global actor** 30](#_Toc486243298)

[**10.1** **Eastern Partnership** 30](#_Toc486243299)

[**10.2** **Southern Neighbourhood** 30](#_Toc486243300)

[**Appendix - List of CoR opinions with impact in 2016** 31](#_Toc486243301)

[CIVEX Commission 31](#_Toc486243302)

[COTER Commission 31](#_Toc486243303)

[ECON Commission 31](#_Toc486243304)

[SEDEC Commission 31](#_Toc486243305)

[ENVE Commission 32](#_Toc486243306)

[NAT Commission 32](#_Toc486243307)

This document contains 31 pages

# **Methodology and interinstitutional initiatives and follow-up**

The Impact Report 2016 provides a thematic overview of the European Committee of Regions' work and achievements within the European decision-making process. The CoR continued its efforts to step up its cooperation with the EU institutions, adapting to the changing institutional reality, following the implementation of the new Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making (IIA).

**Methodology**

As stipulated in Rule 60 of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat-General must submit a report on the impact of Committee opinions to the plenary assembly at least once a year.

This report summarises the impact of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in the major fields of its political activity. A total of 45 opinions adopted in previous years which had an impact on the EU's legislative activity in 2016 are included in this report. Taking in account its date of presentation and adoption at the CoR's July 2017 plenary session, this report includes the impact until May 2017. Opinions on **legislative proposals are highlighted** in the text.

The following criteria were used to determine the impact of the opinion:

* Specific CoR proposals adopted in final legislation;
* CoR policy recommendations considered in proposed legislation or in legislative procedures;
* CoR positions which have made a major contribution to ongoing political debates;
* References made to CoR positions in other EU documents, e.g. Resolutions of the European Parliament (EP).

The following resources were used to compile this report:

* **Contributions from all of the commissions** to the Impact Report[[1]](#footnote-2): each commission held a debate on the impact of its opinions in 2017;
* The CoR Resolution on the **European Commission's Work Programme for 2016**[[2]](#footnote-3);
* The Bureau decision on the **2016 Work Programmes of Commissions, Networks and Platforms**[[3]](#footnote-4);
* The **reports from the European Commission on its follow-up to CoR opinions**. A few months after the adoption of opinions, the European Commission (EC) sends the CoR a report on its follow-up to CoR opinions. These are also published on the Committee's website.
* **Kiklos impact fields**: Kiklos is a new online platform for better planning and follow-up of the political work carried out by the CoR[[4]](#footnote-5). Dedicated impact fields of adopted CoR opinions are available in Kiklos and are regularly updated by the commission secretariats, in coordination with rapporteurs and political groups, in order to monitor the impact of CoR opinions on the EU decision-making process with special regard to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. They also refer to specific activities linked to the opinion that helped to promote the opinion's objectives (interinstitutional meetings, high-level conferences, seminars, etc.).

Together with the impact report, the CoR secretariat general also tables an annual activity report which focuses on the activities and events of the Committee.

**Interinstitutional initiatives and follow-up**

In 2016, the CoR undertook new ambitious cross-cutting and thematic initiatives with a high potential to channel meaningful input from local and regional authorities into the EU decision-making process.

*Reflecting on Europe process*

A core cross-cutting activity launched by the CoR in 2016 is "Reflecting on Europe" – a broad bottom-up consultation exercise on the future of Europe underpinned by an integrated measure in partnership with the EU institutions, local authorities, LRA associations, think tanks and civil society organisations. The process, which has been initiated by a formal request of European Council President Donald Tusk, will feed into an opinion to be adopted in 2018, well ahead of the European elections. The implementation of this exercise is based on structured cooperation with all EU institutions, in particular with their communication departments.

*Investment in Europe's future*

In response to the persistent "investment gap" affecting many of Europe's cities and regions and threatening their long-term competitiveness, investment in 2016 was more than ever at the centre of the CoR's activities. This work took various forms throughout the year, ranging from conferences and reports on the topic to a CoR survey of local and regional authorities on obstacles to investment, as well as an own-initiative opinion on "Bridging the Investment Gap" produced by the CoR President Markku Markkula. In addition, the CoR's Summit of Regions and Cities in Bratislava on 8-9 July 2016 was focused in part on investment and gave rise to the "Bratislava Declaration: Invest and Connect", which was endorsed by the CoR Bureau. Following up on this Declaration, the Bratislava Action Plan was prepared to gather and bring synergies to the Committee's many initiatives on investment, both in-house and in cooperation with all relevant partners including the European Commission and, notably, the European Investment Bank.

*Reinforced cooperation with the European Parliament*

The cooperation with the EP has been systematically upgraded since the signing of the Cooperation Agreement in 2014. The CoR and the EP pursue effective bilateral cooperation on a set of selected priority files which are reviewed and updated every year. As the quality of the relationship with the EP continues to improve at all levels, it has paved the way towards more structured forms of cooperation between the rapporteurs of both institutions and the CoR commissions and EP committees. Following some years of intensified cooperation and annual joint meetings between the CoR COTER and EP REGI, in 2016, for the first time, both institutions also held joint meetings between COTER and TRAN, as well as between NAT and AGRI.

Moreover, following the EP's introduction of the "implementation reports" tool, the CoR is asked to play a role in helping to draft those EP reports and in organising fact-finding missions. This collaborative work and its combined analytical and political output will therefore help to enhance the scrutiny of specific policy implementation with a view to possibly revising EU legislation. This cooperation will also help raise the profile of the CoR's contribution to the EU policy-making process.

*More focused cooperation with the European Commission*

Last year, the European Commission maintained its focus on implementing its 10 political priorities, delivering subsequent legislative proposals announced in its Annual Work Programme and continuing its work on the assessment and review of existing EU legislation as part of the REFIT exercise. The CoR remained an active partner within the stakeholders group of the REFIT Platform, tabling two reports related to regional policy in 2016, for which the CoR has been appointed a lead rapporteur. In view of the increased thematic cooperation the CoR has also undertaken efforts to consolidate its relations with the EC Secretariat-General at administrative level as part of Cooperation Agreement between both institutions.

*More targeted cooperation with the Council*

The need for better regulation offers good grounds for developing and strengthening ties with the Council and its rotating presidencies, and provides for more transparency throughout the EU decision-making process. The CoR's strategy is continuously steered towards more opportunities for effective and active involvement in the EU Presidency Trio's activities and the design of their future programmes, as well as the opportunity to put forward CoR requests at Presidency events, Council working parties and informal Council meetings. A good example of this is the possibility Bart Somers (BE/ALDE) had in his capacity as rapporteur for the CoR own-initiative opinion on **Combatting radicalisation and violent extremism: prevention mechanisms at local and regional level** to address an informal Council meeting session on 23 August in Bratislava dedicated to Radicalisation on the rise in Europe.

Cooperation initiatives with the Council secretariat on thematic priority issues of the CoR commissions are also being developed. The CoR opinions, as well as other relevant CoR documents (studies, consultation reports, impact assessments, etc.), are presented within the relevant Council working parties. The CoR has also successfully formalised its access to the Council's internal planning documents. A good example of this is the possibility given by the Maltese presidency to Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE), CoR rapporteur working on the directives on energy efficiency and energy performance of buildings, to draft a letter outlining the key points of the CoR opinion, which the presidency circulated to the members of the relevant working group.

# **Analysis of the impact of CoR opinions in major fields of political activity**

# **Economic and monetary policy**

## **Economic governance, European Semester and Economic and Monetary Union**

The CoR received approval and support for its work on promoting the involvement of local and regional authorities in implementing the **Country-Specific Recommendations** (CSRs) from former EP President Martin Schulz, in his letter of 12 January 2017. On 30 January 2017, Paul Lindquist, CoR member and member of the Steering Committee of the Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, took the floor on the first day of the Interparliamentary Week on the European Semester organised by the EP.

In May 2017, for the third consecutive year, the In-Depth Analysis[[5]](#footnote-6) provided by the EP services to MEPs in view of the Economic Dialogue with the European Commission on the European Semester (scheduled at the EP ECON meeting on 30 May 2017), reported (in a specific section) on the CoR's analysis of the Country-specific Recommendations (CSRs), and their state of implementation, from a territorial perspective. Such analysis aims at identifying those CSRs that are territory-related and where the local and regional authorities play a role; every year, they feed into the CoR Resolutions on the implementation of the current European Semester (in October) and on the new Annual Growth Survey (in February). The CoR is the only external organisation, other than the Commission, mentioned in this in depth EP briefing.

During the preparation of the opinion on **Improving the governance of the European Semester: a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities[[6]](#footnote-7)**, the CoR received an explicit endorsement from the EP in its Resolution on the 2016 European Semester (adopted on 26 October 2016, rapporteur Alfred Sant, MT/S&D). Interest in involving LRAs in the European Semester had also been expressed by European Commission Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, who accepted an invitation to take part in a debate held at the ECON meeting on 2 December 2016.

In line with the CoR's **Resolution on the European Commission work programme 2016[[7]](#footnote-8)** and following the adoption of this CoR opinion on the **Follow-up to the Five Presidents' report: completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union**[[8]](#footnote-9), the EP endorsed, in its Resolution on the European Semester for economic policy coordination: implementation of 2016 priorities[[9]](#footnote-10)*,* the proposal to adopt a code of conduct for the structural involvement of local and regional authorities in the European Semester.

The opinion raised awareness, particularly at the European Commission, of the fact that local and regional concerns are also at stake. In contrast to the Five Presidents' Report, which did not mention the local and regional level, the European Commission acknowledged its relevance. Firstly, Commissioner Crețu agreed to push for a wide consultation regarding the EU's long-term territorial strategy, and for local and regional authorities to be involved in the European Semester. She assured CoR stakeholders that all of the recommendations presented in this opinion would be given due consideration. Secondly, in response to a letter from the CoR President Markku Markkula stressing the main elements of the opinion on the Follow-up to the Five Presidents' report, Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Moscovici not only thanked the CoR for its valuable contributions and welcomed its support of the CoR, but also agreed with the statements presented in the letter regarding local aspects.

Overall, the result of this monitoring activity is that awareness of the need for a territorial dimension of the European Semester is slowly but continuously increasing.

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| As regards the **Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020**[[10]](#footnote-11), the CoR opinion on this topic made its way into trilogue negotiations between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. After the CoR adopted its opinion in April 2016, the provisional conclusions of the trilogue agreement stated two key elements of the opinion: first, the fact that the programme should be available to local and regional authorities, and second, that it should get its own funding if maintained after 2020. These elements are included in the final version of the SRSP Regulation, adopted by the Council on 11 May 2017. |

## **Single Market and the sharing economy**

Thanks to the opinion on **Upgrading the Single Market**[[11]](#footnote-12), the CoR increased its interinstitutional cooperation with the European Parliament and the European Commission on the Single Market strategy, mainly via presentations by the rapporteur at the EP Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee hearing and at the European Commission Single Market Forum. This cooperation will continue to be important in the context of the roadmap for delivering the Single Market strategy.

In 2016, the CoR led the way on the sharing economy with its opinion on **The local and regional dimension of the sharing economy**[[12]](#footnote-13), as this was the first significant document focused solely on the sharing/collaborative economy to be published by an EU body. It is worth noting that the first policy developments are in line with key recommendations from the CoR opinion, such as the Commission's intention, stated in its Communication on Upgrading the Single Market[[13]](#footnote-14), to develop a European agenda for the collaborative economy. This intention was put into practice with the June 2016 presentation by the European Commission of its Communication on A European agenda for the collaborative economy[[14]](#footnote-15), which aims to provide non-legally binding guidance on how existing EU law applies to collaborative economy business models. Such a comprehensive agenda was one of the key requests put forward in the CoR opinion.

Moreover, both the European Commission and the European Parliament have been very receptive to the CoR on this topic: the EP IMCO Committee's report[[15]](#footnote-16) on the collaborative economy contains a dedicated section on the local dimension of the collaborative economy and acknowledges the important role of local and regional authorities in this field. The report observes, for instance, that "an increasing number of local authorities and governments are already active in regulating and developing the collaborative economy".

## **Jobs and growth**

The European Commission proposal for a Regulation on protection against dumped imports from countries not members of the European Union and on protection against subsidised imports from countries not members of the European Union[[16]](#footnote-17) addresses a number of issues raised in the CoR opinion on **Steel: Preserving sustainable jobs and growth in Europe**[[17]](#footnote-18).

In general, the European Commission agrees on:

* the need to use a non-standard methodology in anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations into Chinese imports;
* the fact that steel is one of the sectors most at risk from dumped Chinese goods;
* the fact that while the macroeconomic impact of trade defence instruments is small, they may be crucial for both certain sectors or regions and that this needs to be considered when designing trade defence instruments;
* the fact that increased imports from China could lead to increased carbon leakage as Chinese production in general creates more CO2 emissions than production within the EU.

## **Tourism**

The own-initiative opinion on **Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU[[18]](#footnote-19)** makes the case for an integrated EU tourism policy coupled with a multi-annual action plan and a set of measures, such as the creation of regional tourism investment platforms under the EFSI, the organisation of regional investment fora for tourism, a dedicated heading for promoting European tourism in the annual EU budget, a new award for "European Capitals of Smart Tourism" suggested by the European Parliament, the creation of a European citizens travel card or a formal European-wide recognition of tourism qualifications – all with the aim to support tourism-related SMEs. Even if it is too early to measure the full impact of this opinion adopted in December 2016, early results highlight the CoR's enhanced impact in the area:

* Due to its opinion the CoR is perceived as a driving force for European tourism policy and was for the first time invited to deliver a keynote speech at the European Tourism Day 2016 and European Tourism Forum 2016 alongside Commissioner Bieńkowska and leading Members of the European Parliament.
* The main conference on European tourism on World Tourism Day 2016 jointly organised by EC, the EP, the CoR and major stakeholders from the industry took place at the CoR.
* The CoR rapporteur has been invited by the EC to be a member of the jury awarding the newly created annual European Capital of Tourism Award which also takes up the CoR's smart cities/regions approach.
* The future Austrian Presidency of the Council (2018) has invited the CoR rapporteur for an exchange of views in preparation for the presidency programme.
* At the initiative of the CoR rapporteur MEPs, NECSTour regions and the European Travel Commission (ETC) joined the rapporteur in signing an Open Letter to President Juncker inviting the EC to include tourism in the European Commission's Work Programme 2018.
* The ETC invited the CoR to become, along with the EC and the EP, a co-organiser of the Promotional Platform for the EU-China Tourism Year 2018.
* NECSTouR, the European association of tourism regions, has shown a genuine interest in implementing proposals from the opinion, such as the European citizens' travel card, in close cooperation with the CoR.

The EP, the Commission, the European Investment Bank, the WTO and tourism-related stakeholders have expressed their interest in working together with the CoR in implementing the CoR opinion. The CoR's proposal to establish a Tourism Contact Group (TCG) bringing together all decision-makers was accepted by all EU institutions and stakeholders. The Contact Group will begin its work in 2017 and will be a valuable tool for pursuing the implementation of the opinion.

## **Enterprise and Industry**

The own-initiative opinion on **State aid and Services of General Economic Interest[[19]](#footnote-20)** (SGEIs) expresses the main political positions of the CoR in relation to the Commission's Notice on the Notion of State aid as referred to in Article 107(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ 2016/C 262/01)[[20]](#footnote-21), the targeted review of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER)[[21]](#footnote-22) and the EU framework on SGEIs.

Regarding the Notice on the Notion of State aid, several points of the Notice are in line with the CoR opinion, namely:

* the recognition of the non-State aid nature of local/municipal infrastructure and local services whichthe Commission considersare not capable of affecting trade between Member States even if they are commercially exploited.

As regards the GBER, the amended Regulation was adopted by the Commission on 17 May 2017. The CoR opinion had an impact on the amended Regulation, namely on:

* the number of passengers used as a criterion in order to define very small airports[[22]](#footnote-23) (a considerable increase in comparison with the draft proposal) and
* the increase of aid to sports infrastructure and multifunctional recreational infrastructure that is exempt from notification[[23]](#footnote-24).

On 17 May 2017, the Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, sent a letter to the CoR president and the ECON chair announcing the adoption of the amended Regulation and presenting the main changes mainly as regards investments in regional airports and ports. In relation to SGEIs, and following the CoR's proposal, the Commission adopted five decisions establishing that five public measures for purely local operations in Spain, Germany and Portugal involved no State aid because they were unlikely to affect trade between Member States. The Commission noted that for these kinds of measures, Member States always have full autonomy to decide and invest state funds and that these decisions also allow Member States to take responsibility for their policy choices for local measures.

During a hearing organised by the EP Intergroup on Common Goods and Public Services, under the heading Social Investment: Time for a (Re)Birth, the CoR position on the need to review the definition of social housing was raised. *Housing Europe* published an article (2 November 2016) presenting the CoR opinion and analysing the relevant points for the housing sector.

# **Regional policy and EU budget**

## **Investment Plan for Europe**

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| The proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) 2015/1017 as regards the extension of the duration of the European Fund for Strategic Investments as well as the introduction of technical enhancements for that Fund and the European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH)[[24]](#footnote-25)takes on board several CoR recommendations from the opinion on **Investment Plan and European Fund for Strategic Investments**[[25]](#footnote-26), such as:* a further reinforcement of the additionality principle by better defining projects that are additional, including cross-border infrastructure projects;
* in order to finance the increase in the financial capacity of EFSI, the Commission suggested using the reimbursed costs of EIB operations paid out by the beneficiaries, and the available resources from the unallocated margin;
* a further strengthening of the advisory services of EIAH;
* the extended EFSI should address remaining market failures and sub-optimal investment situations in other sectors and areas, such as climate change, research and innovation, cross-border and sustainable transport, and the digital transformation;
* a reinforcement of the uptake of EFSI in less-developed and transition regions: easier combination of other sources of EU funding such as ESIF, Horizon 2020 and CEF with EFSI support has been put forward.
 |

## **Simplification of ESIF**

In preparing the opinion on **Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities**[[26]](#footnote-27), the CoR and the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies of the Council organised three joint workshops on simplification of the implementation of cohesion policy which resulted in two reports including proposals for simplification which were endorsed by the CoR opinion and turned into political messages.

EU Member States explicitly welcomed the CoR's work on the simplification of cohesion policy, which was noted in the Council conclusions of 10 June 2016 on "A more R&I friendly, smart and simple Cohesion Policy and the European Structural and Investment Funds more generally"[[27]](#footnote-28): "The Council of the European Union […] welcomes the debate within the informal technical workshops on simplification jointly organised by the Netherlands Presidency and the Committee of the Regions".

The European Commission also acted on the policy recommendations of the CoR. During the second annual conference on the *EU Budget Focused on Results* held on 27 September 2016, the European Commission Director-General for Budgets considered this opinion to be one of the most valuable sources of input received in view of the preparations leading up to the Omnibus proposal[[28]](#footnote-29). Elements suggested in the CoR opinion that are addressed by the aforementioned legislative proposal include the CoR proposals related to:

* financial instruments: direct appointment of financial intermediaries under certain circumstances;
* auditing and reporting requirements: single audit system;
* simplified cost options: clarifications and reinforcement for more streamlined audit;
* Joint Action Plans: measures to encourage uptake of tools facilitating integrated territorial development.

## **EU Budget**

In his Recommendation for a Mandate for Trilogue on the 2017 draft budget, the European Parliament's rapporteur on the EU Budget for 2017 stressed several points, also highlighted by the CoR's **Resolution on the Draft Annual EU Budget for 2017[[29]](#footnote-30)**, and which were also included in the **final adopted EU Budget for 2017**, such as:

* support for meeting the EU's objectives in the field of research and innovation;
* a need for additional financial resources for the milk, pig meat and fruit and vegetable sectors;
* the use of the cohesion policy-related technical adjustments for tackling the migration crisis and youth unemployment;
* the urgency of fully offsetting and restoring original Horizon 2020 and CEF budget lines, affected by the creation of EFSI ;
* the need to structurally tackle the high level of the RAL[[30]](#footnote-31);
* strengthening the Youth Employment Initiative;
* a call to the Council not to artificially make further cuts to the payment appropriations for cohesion policy programmes.

The European Parliament's Resolution on the Preparation of the post-electoral revision of the MFF 2014-2020: Parliament's input ahead of the Commission's proposal"[[31]](#footnote-32) is in line with the recommendations expressed by the CoR in its own-initiative opinion on the **Mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)**[[32]](#footnote-33), as the rapporteurs of the EP Resolution closely cooperated with the CoR rapporteur, in particular as regards:

* the need for further flexibility in the MFF and for strengthening the Horizon 2020 and Connecting Europe Facility;
* the continuation of the Youth Employment Initiative;
* the need to address the payment backlog.

In its 70th Follow-up Report on the CoR's Plenary Session of June 2016, the European Commission welcomed the CoR's own-initiative opinion. The Commission announced that the package of mid-term review proposals[[33]](#footnote-34) addresses the main aspects of the CoR opinion and aims:

* to provide additional financial means for efficiently tackling migration and security risks, and for fostering economic growth, job creation and competitiveness;
* to increase the flexibility of the EU budget as well as its ability to quickly and efficiently address unforeseen circumstances;
* to simplify financial rules and thereby reduce the administrative burden on recipients of EU funds.

On 7 March 2017, the Council unanimously endorsed in principle the agreement on the revision of the MFF (UK and IT abstaining) and the European Parliament's Committee for Budgets adopted its recommendation on the revision on 27 March 2017. The proposal was adopted by the European Parliament on 5 April 2017 and is still awaiting adoption by unanimity in the Council.

The CoR will closely scrutinise the proposed changes as well as legislation that has already been adopted, in order to prepare its position well ahead of the Commission's proposal for the next MFF.

## **Regional development indicators**

The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 99/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European statistical programme 2013-2017 by extending it to 2018-2020[[34]](#footnote-35) picks up on the concept presented in the opinion on **Indicators for territorial development – GDP and beyond**[[35]](#footnote-36) in order to:

* achieve better statistics on cross-cutting issues and to produce more integrated statistics to describe complex social, environmental and economic phenomena beyond the traditional measures of economic output.
* reinforce the support for evidence-based policy-making by a more flexible and increased use of spatial information combined with social, economic and environmental statistical information for regions, regional typologies, cities and the degree of urbanisation – as identified in the opinion as a prerequisite for high-quality policy-making at a local and regional level.
* engage proactively in a regular dialogue with users to better understand their needs.

## **Cross-border cooperation**

In its follow-up report dated 29 March 2016, the European Commission welcomed the CoR's support for the ongoing review of cross-border obstacles as outlined in the opinion on **Strengthening Cross-border Cooperation: the need for a better regulatory framework?**[[36]](#footnote-37) and underlined in the CoR **Resolution on the European Commission work programme 2016**[[37]](#footnote-38)**.**

The Government of Luxembourg put forward a proposal for the creation, in 2016, of a working group of experts from different EU Member States with the aim of developing a concrete proposal for the Regulation on a European Cross-Border Convention. The working group met several times in 2016 and a proposal was presented at the **Directors-General Meeting on Territorial Cohesion**, held on 3 April 2017. The European Committee of the Regions has been an active contributor in terms of both logistics and content in the development of this proposal. The group intends to draw conclusions by the end of 2017, leading to a legislative proposal which ideally could be put forward at the end of 2018.

The proposals of the working group include two mutually complementary initiatives:

* a proposal to **create a new, voluntarily applicable legal tool addressing administrative and legal obstacles – European Cross-Border Convention** (which has also been addressed by the CoR opinion in 2015) – that would allow local and regional authorities to initiate a procedure for solving these obstacles and encourage the competent authority to address them;
* a proposal to **set up a European multilevel platform to exchange problem-solving methods** from different parts of Europe and foster the exchange of experiences and best practices.

The rapporteur of the opinion **Territorial vision 2050 – What future?**[[38]](#footnote-39) presented the opinion at the EP ECR Group's Localism and Subsidiarity Policy Group meeting on 7 December and at the Congress of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in the panel session entitled "European territorial development: Vision and scenarios towards 2050" on 20-22 April 2016. The CoR's input has been incorporated into the CEMR Bluebook on the corresponding topic.

## **Urban policy**

The Mayors of the EU Capital Cities adopted a Declaration on the EU Urban Agenda on 21 April 2016 in Amsterdam. This political statement clearly followed the CoR opinion **Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU**[[39]](#footnote-40)and underlined that the final goal of the EU Urban Agenda should be a genuine cross-cutting anchoring of the urban dimension in the EU decision-making process ("urban mainstreaming"), which applies to all relevant European policies and legislation, with a bottom-up approach.

This opinion, together with the CoR opinion on **Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda[[40]](#footnote-41)** which had been requested by the Dutch Presidency of the Council, served as a basis for shaping the content of the draft Pact of Amsterdam establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU[[41]](#footnote-42). A number of CoR recommendations were taken on board in the final version of the Pact, such as:

* a stronger institutional role for the CoR is envisaged as it "invites the CoR as the Union's advisory body formally representing regions and municipalities at EU level, to contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda of the EU";
* the inclusion of a chapter on Member States, including the commitment to engage the relevant bodies at all levels of government in the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda;
* the call upon the European Commission to regularly report on the state of play of the EU Urban Agenda.

In general terms, the CoR is participating in the governance of the Urban Agenda at the highest level. An overall assessment of the cities involved in 12 partnerships[[42]](#footnote-43) shows that a large number of CoR members' local and regional authorities are also participating in the partnerships.

On 24 June 2016, the General Affairs Council adopted the Council conclusions on an Urban Agenda for the EU. The Council conclusions in particular invited the Committee of the Regions to provide input, within its competences, for the further development of the Urban Agenda.

The UN Habitat III "New Urban Agenda" declaration[[43]](#footnote-44) also took into consideration the main messages of the opinion on Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda. The final version of the Declaration recognised the holistic and integrated approach for a New Urban Agenda, as well as the relevance of international cooperation and exchanges between regional and local authorities to promote sustainable economic development as well as social and environmental protection.

# **Transport and Mobility**

In 2016, the CoR's impact on transport policy was mainly focused on: the Fourth railway package, missing transport links and the ports policy.

**3.1. Missing transport links**

The missing links initiative is a good example of the possible outcome of interinstitutional cooperation between the CoR, the European Parliament and the European Commission. The "missing links" problem was the main issue of discussion at the first joint meeting of EP TRAN Committee and the CoR's COTER commission taking place on 29 September 2016.

As the result of the interinstitutional cooperation on the missing links initiative and the opinion on **Missing transport links in border regions**[[44]](#footnote-45), the European Commission's DG MOVE proposed an amendment to the CEF Transport Annual Work Programme 2016. The general envelope now includes EUR 110 million for projects on small cross-border projects to bridge missing links.

## **3.2 Railway policy**

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| * The CoR opinion on **The Fourth railway package**[[45]](#footnote-46)advocated a stronger role for the European Railway Agency as a one-stop shop for decisions on vehicles and safety certificates for railway companies, whilst allowing the option of an authorisation by national safety authorities for vehicles that are only to be used within that country, which was taken into account in the final acts under the technical pillar of the Fourth railway package[[46]](#footnote-47).
* The CoR opinion underlined the **principle of free administration**, which enables local authorities to decide how they want to organise their public transport services, and insisted that Article 5(2) of the existing Regulation (EC) 1370/2007 must not be called into question. The final text of **Regulation (EU) 2016/2338[[47]](#footnote-48)** **maintains this core provision**.
* Regulation (EU) 2016/2338also takes on board the recommendation in the CoR opinion to **increase the ceilings for direct awarding of public service contracts for public transport by rail** **to 500 000 km**, instead of the European Commission's initial proposal of 150 000 km, which would have limited the principle of local and regional authority free administration.
* In line with the CoR position on the matter, **Directive (EU) 2016/2370**[[48]](#footnote-49) allows Member States to **choose between different organisational models, subject to appropriate safeguards to ensure the impartiality of the infrastructure manager** as regards the essential functions, traffic management and maintenance planning.

A comparison between the CoR opinion and the final texts shows that a number of CoR recommendations for legislative amendments have been taken on board:Regulation (EU) 2016/2338 (PSO-Regulation)* The clarification that cost-covering services could be combined with non-cost-covering services;
* the obligation for operators that perform public service contracts to provide competent authorities with essential information for the award of public service contracts;
* an upper limit of 500 000 km instead of 150 000 km for the direct awarding of public service contracts for public passenger transport services by rail;
* the option for competent authorities to directly award public service contracts for public passenger transport services by rail directly in certain cases;
* the inclusion of cooperation with other competent authorities in order to create a larger pool of rolling stock to the measures to ensure effective and non-discriminatory access to rolling stock.

Directive (EU) 2016/2370 (Governance Directive):* Tackling cross-border bottlenecks as one of the objectives of the European Network of Infrastructure Managers.

Regulation (EU) 2016/796 (European Railway Agency (ERA) Regulation):* The possibility to appeal against a failure of the Agency to act within the applicable time limits;
* a specification of the procedures and deadlines applied by the Board of Appeal.
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## **3.3. EU Ports policy**

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| A comparison between the CoR opinion **Framework on Future EU Ports Policy**[[49]](#footnote-50) and the final text of **Regulation (EU) 2017/352** establishing a framework on market access to port services and financial transparency of ports[[50]](#footnote-51) shows that a number of CoR recommendations for legislative amendments have been taken on board:* The final text exempts dredging from the scope of the Regulation (with the exception of Article 11(2)), but mooring, pilotage and towage are still covered;
* a definition of the term "competent authority" was provided in the final text. However, the wording is different from the CoR proposal;
* the objective of strengthening the role of competent authorities with regard to the minimum requirements for the provision of port services was reflected in the final text. However, the reference to regional requirements was not included;
* the provisions related to concessions were deleted in the final text;
* public service obligations can now also be imposed to ensure the safety, security or environmental sustainability of port operations, as well as territorial cohesion;
* internal operators are able to provide port services other than port services under public service obligations;
* the possibility for the EC to adopt delegated acts on common charging principles for port infrastructure charges was deleted;
* the EC proposal to establish an independent supervisory body responsible for monitoring and supervising the application of the Regulation was deleted.

The regulation includes a provision regarding the consultation of port users and other stakeholders, including local and regional authorities, ensuring that their views are taken into account. The CoR opinion on the **Regeneration of Port Cities and Port Areas[[51]](#footnote-52)** welcomes the principles laid down in Article 15 of the Ports Regulation and invites the European Commission to provide further guidance when it comes to implementing it. |

# **Research and innovation**

In 2016, the Commission appointed 30 new members to the Bioeconomy Panel. Mr Van der Sande represents the Committee of the Regions as an observer on the panel. Regional representatives are members of this panel, as requested in the CoR opinion on **Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe**[[52]](#footnote-53)**.** In April 2016, the panel organised the 4th Bioeconomy Stakeholders' Conference in Utrecht at which a European Bioeconomy Stakeholders' Manifesto was adopted. This sets out the opportunities and challenges facing the bioeconomy. In particular:

* it highlights the importance of regions and municipalities to the bioeconomy;
* it shares the views set out in the CoR opinion regarding the importance of public awareness, and spells out the role of regions and cities in raising public awareness.

Several points of the opinion on the **eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020**[[53]](#footnote-54)are reflected in the Council conclusionsadopted on 20 September 2016[[54]](#footnote-55):

* "the objectives of eGovernment are, among others, to empower citizens and businesses, to increase mobility in the Single Market and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector";
* "the facilitation of cross-border digital public services further reduces the administrative burden" ;
* "it is important that eGovernment and electronic services are designed in an open and interactive manner";
* "Continue to improve governance, network and information security";

# **Culture and youth**

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| In line with the amendments proposed in the CoR opinion on **The European Capitals of Culture (2020-2033)**[[55]](#footnote-56) and based on the European Commission's proposal[[56]](#footnote-57), on 22 November 2016 the Council amended the decision establishing an EU action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033, allowing EFTA/EEA countries (Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein) to have access to the action. The file is currently progressing in the European Parliament (CULT Committee leading).  |

On 22 November 2016, the Council of the EU adopted a general approach[[57]](#footnote-58) regarding the proposal for a decision on a **European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018)**[[58]](#footnote-59).

The Council introduced several changes in the Commission proposal, some of which were called for in the **CoR Resolution**[[59]](#footnote-60):

* + to strengthen the role of Europeana, the EU digital platform for cultural heritage;
	+ to increase the use of media and social networks;
	+ to specify that the organisation of the Year at national level is the responsibility of Member States;
	+ to promote a bottom-up approach involving civil society;
	+ to reinforce cooperation with international organisations.

The EP Culture and Education Committee (CULT) report[[60]](#footnote-61) mentions the CoR Resolution and takes on board several amendments proposed:

* + to seek complementarities between the European Heritage Label and the European Capitals of Culture initiatives and the European Year of Cultural Heritage (Amendment 3 in the CoR Resolution);
	+ to ensure coordination at Member State level (Amendment 5 in the CoR Resolution);
	+ to respect the freedom of the arts, in accordance with Article 13 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Amendment 3 in the CoR Resolution);
	+ the activities organised in the framework of the European Year may be co-financed through dedicated grants from national, regional and local authorities in the Member States and through flexible funding mechanisms such as public-private partnerships or crowdfunding (in point 14, the CoR Resolution warns about considerable funding fluctuations from one year to the next, which may jeopardise the attainment of goals).

The Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018)[[61]](#footnote-62) was adopted by the Council of the EU on 11 May 2017 following a political agreement with the European Parliament.

The European Parliament Resolution of 27 October 2016 on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015[[62]](#footnote-63) echoes several points highlighted in the CoR opinion on **European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)**[[63]](#footnote-64)**.**

* Young people should be actively involved in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of all youth policies;
* young people should be helped and empowered to address the extremely serious problems they currently face;
* it is important to underline that young people are politically engaged in many ways;
* it is important to ensure that all young people have access to quality education;
* the needs of young people affected by multiple discrimination;
* stresses the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation at all levels;
* suggests involving local and regional authorities in the area of youth policy;
* education should also contribute to the personal development and growth of young people;
* stresses the vital importance of informal and non-formal learning, the arts, sport, volunteering and social activities;

The Council conclusions of 21 November 2016 on Promoting new approaches in youth work to uncover and develop the potential of young people[[64]](#footnote-65) echo several points highlighted in the CoR opinion.

* The EU and its Member States need to support and promote the implementation of effective cross-sectoral policies;
* young people themselves should play a crucial role in designing, developing and implementing the innovation process of youth work;
* work closely with the representatives of regional and local authorities, youth councils and youth work organisations, young people and other actors in the youth field;
* carry out regular analysis.

1. **Environment, Climate Change and Energy**
	1. **EU Energy and climate policy**

The opinion on the **Energy Union package[[65]](#footnote-66)**, thanks to fruitful contact between the CoR and EP rapporteurs, is reflected in numerous references to major local and regional issues in the EP report/resolution.

The EP took on board the following key recommendations made by the CoR:

* Support for local authorities, communities, households and individuals to become energy producers and suppliers on an equal footing with other players in the energy market;
* Call for the Commission and Member States "to promote the self-production of energy and the implementation and interconnection of local renewable energy grids as a complement to their national energy policies"[[66]](#footnote-67);
* Need for the Member States to establish judicial and administrative mechanisms to spur the involvement of local communities in electricity generation by making them stakeholders in small-scale renewable electricity generation projects;
* Greater consideration to distribution system operators' local and regional responsibility for the Energy Union, given that the energy landscape is becoming more and more decentralised;
* The importance of all Member States implementing the requirements of the Third Energy Package with regard to the unbundling of transmission and distribution systems, especially in light of the increased role of DSOs in data access and management ("DSOs, among other market participants, can also support local authorities by providing them with data to enable energy transition within their territory"[[67]](#footnote-68));
* Call for the Commission to step up support for the Covenant of Mayors, Smart Cities and Smart Communities and the 100% RES communities so as to expand and further develop them as a tool to promote self-generation and energy efficiency measures, fight energy poverty, and a tool for exchanging best practices and raising awareness of available financial support for local authorities;[[68]](#footnote-69)

The adoption of the opinion on **An EU Strategy on Heating and Cooling[[69]](#footnote-70)** was accompanied bynumerous bilateral exchanges with rapporteurs from the EP's ITRE and ENVI Committees.

The EP in its Resolution[[70]](#footnote-71) took on board a number of key CoR recommendations, such as:

* An acknowledgement of the local and regional dimension in setting the right policies for heating and cooling, in planning and implementing infrastructure and consumer consultation, in order to remove obstacles and make heating and cooling more efficient and sustainable;
* The need "to empower and support local and regional authorities to apply a fully integrated systems-based approach to urban planning, infrastructure development, building and renovation of housing stock, and new industrial development, in order to maximise potential cross-overs, efficiencies and other mutual benefits";
* The need to map the potential for local heating and cooling throughout Europe;
* Gradual replacing of the use of inefficient and unsustainable heating/cooling systems in urban agglomerations with efficient district systems modernised with state-of-the-art heating/cooling technologies, shift to high-efficiency local cogeneration systems and renewable alternatives;

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| The opinion on **Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments[[71]](#footnote-72)** has not yet shown its full impact as the legislative process has not yet been finalised. The European Parliament agreed its position on 15 February 2017. On 28 February 2017, the Environment Council agreed its negotiating position (general approach). The file is now under discussion in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure (trilogue). Both the EC and the EP considered the following CoR recommendations:* to acknowledge the expertise of local and regional authorities thanks to their frontline role in combating climate change;
* to place greater emphasis on all initiatives including those at local and regional level, which can contribute to achieving the outlined targets;
* to acknowledge that low-carbon transition should be mainstreamed through all sectors and level of governance.
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The opinion on **Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22 in Marrakech[[72]](#footnote-73)** contributed to the preparation of the European Commission's Communication on The Road from Paris, which clearly stated its commitment to multi-level governance at EU and international level, as well as a new focus on cities in order to implement climate action on the ground.

The EP Resolution on the implementation of the Paris Agreement[[73]](#footnote-74) includes a number of points that were suggested in the CoR opinion. Salient aspects include:

* a reference to the role of local and regional authorities as crucial partners in implementing the Paris Agreement and in contributing to the achievement of mid- and long-term climate policy goals;
* the recognition of local and regional authorities as the biggest contributors to the Lima-Paris Action Agenda and NAZCA that have already shown their commitment to delivering on the implementation of the Paris Agreement with regard to both mitigation and adaptation, ensuring horizontal coordination and mainstreaming of climate change policy, empowering local communities and citizens, and promoting processes of societal change and innovation, especially through initiatives such as the Global Covenant of Mayors and the Under 2 Memorandum of Understanding;
* a reference to multi-level and multistakeholder governance as one of the key areas for progress at the COP22 in Marrakech.

The CoR, thanks to its active participation in the COP22 in Marrakech, asserted its role as one of indispensable territorial actors in the COPs, capable of engaging with stakeholders, including relevant delegations. The COP22 was used as another opportunity to reaffirm the role of local and regional governments as a partner of national governments, in order to support the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) design and implementation.

The CoR opinion on **The future of the Covenant of Mayors[[74]](#footnote-75)** had a major impact on the interinstitutional debate:

* merging the Covenant of Mayors and the Compact of Mayors, creating the world's largest coalition of cities engaged in climate action – Global Covenant of Mayors;
* the CoR has a seat in its Founders' Council – advisory body of the General Secretariat;
* the CoR has observer status in the ISG meetings setting the agenda for the Covenant of Mayors;
* the merger of the Covenant of Mayors and the Mayors Adapt initiatives by the EC.
	1. **EU environment policy**

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| The implementation of the EC Clean Air Programme is still ongoing but in addition to the impact already reported in 2015, the CoR opinion on **The Clean Air Policy Package for Europe**[[75]](#footnote-76)has had further impact in 2016. The new Directive on the reduction of national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants is overall of a lower ambition than the CoR had called for. However, in line with the CoR opinion the new Directive stipulates that: * Member States in their National Air Pollution Control Programmes have to take account of the need to reduce air pollutant emissions for the purpose of reaching compliance with air quality objectives under the Ambient Air Quality Directive 2008/50/EC;
* the EC has to report on progress regarding air quality levels in line with the guidelines of the World Health Organisation;
* the EC has to investigate the need for further action in the event of non-achievement, including additional legislative proposals including new source-based air control pollution legislation, in order to ensure compliance with the Directive.
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| Many recommendations from the CoR opinion on **Legislative proposals amending waste directives[[76]](#footnote-77)** were reflected in the first reading position adopted by the European Parliament[[77]](#footnote-78). These include:* extended producer responsibility schemes;
* an increase in the proposed 2030 reuse and recycling target for municipal waste (from 65% to 70%);
* possibility to set reuse and recycling targets for construction and demolition waste by 2025 and 2030;
* a definition of littering;
* a target and restrictions on the landfill of non-hazardous waste other than municipal waste.

On 19 May 2017, the Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) agreed on a Council negotiating mandate. In comparison to the CoR and EP position, the Council negotiating mandate is less ambitious and lowers the reuse and recycling targets for municipal waste and for packaging waste. |

The own-initiative opinion **Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives**[[78]](#footnote-79) has had further impact in 2016. In line with the CoR opinion, on 7 December 2016 the EC decided not to open up the Directives for review, but to adopt an Action Plan on their improved implementation.

The European Commission closely involved the CoR in:

* the preparation of the Action Plan (CoR participation in the project team of Commissioners steering the preparation);
* the roll-out of the Action Plan (co-responsibility to be given to the CoR for some actions of the Action Plan, including in particular the setting up of a joint CoR/EC platform to support knowledge exchange and the engagement of local and regional authorities).

The Action Plan, adopted by the European Commission on 27 April 2017, stresses that "*the CoR (…) will play an essential role as regards engagement with and outreach to regional and local authorities*."

On 21 May 2017, the CoR first Vice-President Karl-Heinz Lambertz co-signed a joint declaration with Commissioner Vella proclaiming European Natura 2000 Day.

The CoR outlook opinion on **EU environment law: improving reporting and compliance[[79]](#footnote-80)** called for the EC to involve the CoR closely on any future European Commission initiatives on better implementation of EU environment law. As a result, the EC Communication on the new Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) tool of May 2016 states that:

* the EC will liaise with the CoR in respect of key horizontal findings; e.g. through the joint CoR/EC Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment[[80]](#footnote-81);
* the outcome of these dialogues will feed into the EIR cycles.
1. **Natural Resources**
	1. **Food policy**

Following a recommendation put forward in the opinion on **Food Waste[[81]](#footnote-82)** as well as an opinion on the **EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy[[82]](#footnote-83)**, the CoR was officially invited to participate in the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, established by the European Commissioner on Health and Food Safety in November 2016. Its main mission is to "support the Commission, Member States and all actors in the food value chain in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals 12.3 food loss and waste reduction targets without compromising food safety, feed safety and/or animal health."

Following consultations between the EP and CoR rapporteurs, the EP report on the Initiative on resourceefficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety[[83]](#footnote-84) takes on board the following suggestions made in the CoR opinion:

* the food waste reduction target of 30% by 2025;
* the need for the Commission to adopt a common methodology to measure food waste;
* the importance of improving consumers' understanding of expiration date labels ("use by" and "best before") in order to reduce food waste;
* the promotion of consumers understanding of food waste;
* the need to promote and allow donations of unsold food.

## **Rural policies**

The contribution of the CoR opinion on **Innovation and modernisation of rural economy[[84]](#footnote-85)** has been clearly mentioned in the new Cork 2.0 Declaration[[85]](#footnote-86), adopted at the European Rural Development Conference in September 2016.

One of the main proposals of the opinion, the call for a White Paper on the rural agenda, earned the support of the European Parliament's AGRI Committee, following a joint meeting with the CoR's NAT commission held in November 2016.

The opinion recommendations with regard to the EU budget dedicated to rural areas have influenced the ongoing debate in the European Commission (CoR presentation in the meeting of the civil dialogue group meeting). In line with the CoR message, Commissioner Hogan has clearly expressed himself to be in favour of rebalancing the first and the second pillar of the CAP.

With regard to the CoR opinion on **The future of the dairy sector[[86]](#footnote-87)**, the European Commission decided in July 2016 to put in place the Milk Production Reduction Scheme, fulfilling a major recommendation set out in the opinion.

The EUR 150 million Milk Production Reduction Scheme produced encouraging results and was almost fully subscribed by the end of 2016.

* 1. **Disaster risk reduction**

The CoR opinion on the **Post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action[[87]](#footnote-88)** provided a solid basis for the signing of a five-year Action Plan between the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the CoR in October 2016. Its goal is to support EU cities and regions in taking more concerted action to reduce the impact of natural disasters. Both institutions committed themselves to working closely together and to jointly organising an annual event to mark the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The key messages from the CoR opinion were reflected in the Commission Action Plan[[88]](#footnote-89) and explicit reference was made to the role of local authorities. Under the action plan, the CoR also participated in preparations leading up to the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Istanbul, Turkey and at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Cancun, Mexico.

* 1. **Future of European aquaculture**

As recommended in the opinion on **The future of European aquaculture[[89]](#footnote-90)**, the European Commission:

* introduced certain promotional and labelling measures for aquaculture products;
* the #FARMEDintheEU aquaculture campaign launched in 2016 was particularly successful in Spain, where the Commission joined in the annual celebrations of "Día de la Acuicultura" supporting the "Say yes to sustainable aquaculture" competition launched by the Spanish Observatory for Aquaculture. As part of the campaign, the "FARMED in the EU" school kit developed by the European Commission was promoted at hundreds of schools across the country.
1. **Better regulation, subsidiarity and proportionality**

The EP Resolution on the Annual Report 2014 on subsidiarity and proportionality[[90]](#footnote-91) adopted in May 2017 acknowledges the CoR's Annual Subsidiarity Report for 2014 and makes recommendations that are in line with the views of the CoR:

* the Commission, the Council and Parliament should pay due consideration to the assessments of compliance with the subsidiarity and proportionality principles made by the Committee of the Regions when the latter issues opinions on legislative proposals;
* the EP notes a concern of some national parliaments that in certain Commission legislative proposals the justification of subsidiarity and proportionality is incomplete or indeed non-existent; calls on the Commission to improve its explanatory statements by always providing a detailed, comprehensive and factually substantiated analysis of its proposals in terms of subsidiarity and proportionality[[91]](#footnote-92);
* the EP believes that it is important to support national and regional parliaments by means of tools permitting information exchange, for example by setting up an IT platform that can be accessed by EU citizens.
1. **Migration, security and justice**

The CoR opinions **Reform of the Common European Asylum System[[92]](#footnote-93)** and **Reform of the Common European Asylum System – Package II and Union Resettlement Framework[[93]](#footnote-94)** on the first and second package of the legislative proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System allowed the CoR to contribute to one of the most important political debates of the year[[94]](#footnote-95).

Regarding the main proposal of both packages to reform the so-called Dublin system[[95]](#footnote-96), the CoR recommended giving greater consideration to the preferences and skills of asylum applicants and stressed that positive incentives should be prioritised wherever possible over sanctions in trying to avoid unwanted secondary movements. This recommendation was echoed in the draft report of the European Parliament's LIBE Committee[[96]](#footnote-97), where rapporteur MEP Cecilia Wikström (SE/ALDE) suggested combining protection with integration rather than punitive measures, thus favouring long-term social cohesion and security for all, and discouraging secondary movements.

In line with the opinion on **Protection of refugees in their areas of origin: a new perspective[[97]](#footnote-98)**, the European Commission it its Communication on Forced Displacement and Development:

* pointed out that the EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises provided an important entry point for the strategically coherent use of different EU policies and instruments in close cooperation with Member States;
* called for a common strategic agenda and greater cooperation between international donors, host governments, local communities, civil society and the displaced themselves;
* envisaged boosting engagement with local authorities to increase their capacity in areas such as urban planning, local area-based economic development and service delivery.

The Council conclusions[[98]](#footnote-99) following the Commission Communication state that the EU will "work together with host governments and local authorities in gradually implementing plans and policies for the socio-economic inclusion of forcibly displaced persons, within the framework of local and national development plans."

The opinion on **Combatting radicalisation and violent extremism: prevention mechanisms at local and regional level[[99]](#footnote-100)** contributed to the broad debate on security and terrorism and its findings received a good follow-up at an interinstitutional level.

The European Commission:

* accepted a proposal for the establishment of a repository of prevention strategies at national, regional or local level, networks of practitioners and national/regional contact points in Member States;
* stressed the importance of action on the causes of radicalisation and the recruitment of terrorists, stepping up prevention, mainly by monitoring the internet and maintaining a dialogue with faith-based communities and their leaders.

The text adopted in February 2017 by the European Parliament on the Proposal for a Directive on combating terrorism and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism includes references that relate to the local level. As to the first point it is clear it is part of a compromise including an amendment tabled at the request of the CoR rapporteur:

* explicit recognition of the need to provide, where appropriate, EU level support for national, regional and local authorities in developing prevention policies;
* measures providing support to professionals, including civil society partners likely to come in contact with persons vulnerable to radicalisation should, where appropriate, be taken in cooperation with private companies, relevant civil society organisations, **local communities** and other stakeholders.

At the initiative of the CoR rapporteur, two high-level study visits took place in 2016 to Mechelen to showcase best practices of Mechelen with regard to anti-radicalisation polices[[100]](#footnote-101). The success of Mechelen in preventing radicalisation was widely highlighted in the media and Bart Somers was awarded the 2016 World Mayor Prize.

At the time, the ALDE coordinator of CIVEX Bart Somers managed to influence the content of the EP Resolution on the establishment of an EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights[[101]](#footnote-102), which recognises the importance of all levels of government working closely together on the basis of their competences and responsibilities in order to identify possible systemic threats to the rule of law at an early stage and to improve the protection of the rule of law. It also confers on the CoR a role in passing on the Resolution to subnational parliaments and councils, reinforcing the CoR's position as the main interlocutor dealing with subnational governments.

1. **Europe as a global actor**
	1. **Eastern Partnership**

The Foreign Affairs Council adopted in 2016, for the first time in three years, a set of conclusions

dedicated to the Eastern Partnership. The conclusions responded to the CoR's position as expressed in the opinion on the **Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy[[102]](#footnote-103).** The Council:

* reaffirmed the high importance it attaches to the Eastern Partnership offering tangible results to citizens;
* explicitly mentioned the need for local authorities to be involved in setting priorities as regards cooperation with EaP countries;
* reaffirmed the importance of including local authorities, civil society and youth organisations in the implementation of Association Agendas and Partnership Priorities, thus contributing to the democratic and economic transformation of the Partner countries;
* highlighted the importance of prioritising the fight against corruption.

The CoR has continued its bilateral work with Ukraine and is currently working with its partners[[103]](#footnote-104) to transform political declarations into tangible initiatives supporting administrative reform and facilitating regional cooperation between the EU and Ukrainian regions and municipalities.

* 1. **Southern Neighbourhood**

The Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) was actively involved in the process of preparing the Union for the Mediterranean's (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on Regional Cooperation and Planning as well as through interventions by the representative of Libya in the preparatory ad hoc Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). Thanks to these efforts, local authorities and their successful engagement in regional dialogue efforts were mentioned in the declaration adopted by ministers of all UfM Member States.

The Nicosia Initiative, launched by the CoR in 2016 as a capacity building programme aiming at strengthening Libyan municipalities and promoting their networking and cooperation with European regions, received direct recognition from Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn, who jointly encouraged the CoR to further develop the initiative.

# **Appendix - List of CoR opinions with impact in 2016**

### CIVEX Commission

* CIVEX-VI/011 - Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy
* CIVEX-VI/010 - Combatting Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Prevention mechanisms at local and regional level
* CIVEX-VI/009 - Protection of refugees in their areas of origin: a new perspective
* CIVEX-VI/013 - Reform of the Common European Asylum System
* CIVEX-VI/017 - Reform of the Common European Asylum System – Package II and Union Resettlement Framework

### COTER Commission

* COTER-V-036 - The Fourth railway package
* COTER-V-041 - Framework on future EU ports policy
* COTER-V-046 - Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU
* COTER-VI-003 - Investment Plan and European Fund for Strategic Investments
* COTER-VI-007 - Strengthening Cross-border Cooperation
* COTER-VI-008 - Territorial vision 2050 – What future?
* COTER-VI/009 - Indicators for territorial development – GDP and beyond
* COTER-VI/010 - Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda
* RESOL-VI/011 - Resolution on the Draft Annual EU budget for 2017
* COTER-VI/012 - Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities
* COTER-VI/014 - Mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)
* COTER-VI/016 - Missing transport links in border regions

### ECON Commission

* ECON-VI/005 - The local and regional dimension of the sharing economy
* ECON-VI/008 - Follow-up to the Five Presidents' report: completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union
* ECON-VI/010 - Upgrading the Single Market
* ECON-VI/011 - Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020
* ECON-VI/015 - Steel: Preserving sustainable jobs and growth in Europe
* RESOL-VI/012 - Resolution on the 2016 European Semester and in view of the 2017 Annual Growth Survey

### SEDEC Commission

* EDUC-V/024 - Innovating for Sustainable Growth: A Bioeconomy for Europe. Rapporteur: Rogier van der Sande (NL/ALDE)
* EDUC-V/028 - The European Capitals of Culture (2020-2033), Rapporteur: Elisabeth Vitouch (AT/PES)
* SEDEC-VI/005 - Digital Single Market, Rapporteur: Helma Kuhn-Theis (DE/EPP)
* SEDEC-VI/007 - European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), Rapporteur: Csaba Borboly (RO/EPP)
* SEDEC-VI/013 - eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020, Rapporteur: Martin Andreasson (SE/EPP)
* RESOL-VI/014: Resolution on the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018)

### ENVE Commission

* ENVE-V/037 - EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change
* ENVE-V/046 - The Clean Air Policy Package for Europe
* ENVE-VI/003 - Energy Union Package
* ENVE-VI/005 - Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives
* ENVE-VI/006 - The future of the Covenant of Mayors
* ENVE-VI/007 - Cost-effective emission reductions and low-carbon investments
* ENVE-VI/008 - EU environment law: improving reporting and compliance
* ENVE-VI/010 - Legislative proposals amending waste directives
* ENVE-VI/011 - EU action plan for the Circular Economy
* ENVE-VI/012 - An EU Strategy on Heating and Cooling
* ENVE-VI/013 - Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22 in Marrakesh

### NAT Commission

* NAT-V-042 - Post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action
* NAT-VI/001 - The Future of the dairy sector
* NAT-VI/002 - The Future of European Aquaculture
* NAT-VI/004 - Innovation and modernization of rural economy
* NAT-VI/008 - Food Waste
* NAT-VI/009 - Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation
* NAT-VI/010 - The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues

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1. CIVEX: COR 354/2017; ECON: COR 30/2017; ENVE: COR 6782/2016; SEDEC: COR 118/2017; NAT: COR 6711/2016; COTER: COR 15/2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. COR 5929/2015, adopted on 4 December 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. COR 6660/2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://kiklos.cor.europa.eu/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/602082/IPOL\_IDA(2017)602082\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2017/602082/IPOL_IDA%282017%29602082_EN.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. COR 5386/2016, Rapporteur: Rob Jonkman (NL/ECR), adopted unanimously at the CoR plenary session on 11 May 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. COR 5929/2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. COR 5112/2015, Rapporteur: Paul Lindquist (SE/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Resolution 2016/2101(INI), adopted on 26 October 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. CDR 1214/2016, Rapporteur: Olga Zrihen (BE/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. COR 6628/2015, Rapporteur: Alessandro Pastacci (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. COR 2698/2015, Rapporteur: Benedetta Brighenti (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. COM(2015) 550 final [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. COM(2016) 356 final [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Committee draft report PE595.756 adopted on 11/05/2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. COM(2016) 721 final [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. COR 1726/2016, Rapporteur: Isolde Ries (DE/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. COR 6648/2015, Rapporteur: Hanspeter Wagner (AT/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. ECON-VI/013, Rapporteur: Markus Töns (DE/PES), available[here](http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/pages/opinion-factsheet.aspx?OpinionNumber=CDR%201460/2016) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Available [here](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016XC0719%2805%29) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. More info available [here](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2016_second_gber_review/index_en.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. The CoR opinion asked for this number to be set at 300 000 passengers per annum (instead of 50 000 as proposed in the draft proposal) and under the same point of the opinion reference was made to the threshold of 200 000 for airports providing SGEIs. Finally the Commission set the threshold at 200 000 passengers per annum, perhaps in an effort to align this with the threshold for airports providing SGEIs. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. *Sports infrastructure and multifunctional recreational infrastructure* have been included in the final version of the Regulation under the same point which concerns aid for culture and heritage conservation. This was also a demand put forward in the CoR opinion (*looks forward to sports infrastructure and multifunctional recreational infrastructure being put on an equal footing in the revised GBER so that operating aid for the latter infrastructure is also exempted up to the level of EUR 2 million per infrastructure per year*;) and the draft Regulation proposed the increase of aid only for culture and heritage conservation. The amended Regulation adopted exactly the same threshold as proposed in the CoR opinion (*EUR 2 million per infrastructure per year)* for exemption of notification. On the same point, the CoR's call as regards investment and state aid for culture and heritage conservation for a EUR 1 to 2 million increase in the threshold below which the method for calculating aid described in Article 53(8) of Regulation 651/2014 may be applied, with state aid set at 80% of the project's eligible costs (as an alternative to the method described in Article 53(6) and (7) of Regulation (EU) No 651/2014) has been adopted by the Commission in the amended Regulation. Moreover, the Commission applied the same increase for sports infrastructure and multifunctional recreational infrastructure. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. COM(2016) 597 final [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. COR 943/2015, Rapporteur: Claude Gewerc (FR/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. COR 8/2016, Rapporteur: Petr Osvald (CZ/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Council conclusions, 24 June 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. COM(2016) 605 final [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. COR 2321/2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. "Reste à liquider" (RAL) – French for "still to be spent"): the total amount of appropriations that the EU has committed but not yet paid at a given point in time. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. 2015/2353(INI) adopted on 6 July 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. COR 9/2016, Rapporteur: Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. COM(2016) 603 final; SWD(2016) 299 final; COM (2016) 604 final; COM(2016) 606 final; COM(2016) 607 final; COM(2016) 605 final. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. COM(2016) 557 final [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. COR 4287/2015, Rapporteur: Catiuscia Marini (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. COR 4286/2015, Rapporteur: Nikola Dobroslavić (HR/ EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. COR 5929/2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. COR 4285/2015, Rapporteur: Oldrich Vlasak (CZ/ECR) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. COR 6902/2013, Rapporteur: Bas Verkerk (NL/ALDE) [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. COR 5511/2015, Rapporteur: Hella Dunger-Loper (DE/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Adopted at the informal ministerial meeting on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam (NL) [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. First 4 Pilot partnerships launched in 2015: Air Quality, Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Housing and Urban Poverty; Partnerships launched in 2016: Circular Economy, Digital Transition, Urban Mobility and Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy; Partnerships launched in 2017: Sustainable Use of Land; Energy Transition; Climate Change Adaptation; Innovation in Public Procurement. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Adopted at the UN Habitat III Regional Meeting in Prague, 16-18 March 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. COR 4294/2016, Rapporteur: Michiel Scheffer (NL/ALDE) [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. COR 27/2013, Rapporteur: Pascal Mangin (FR/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. The Fourth railway package consists of a "technical pillar" and a "governance pillar".
The technical pillar comprises the three following documents:
- Regulation (EU) 2016/796 - OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 1–43;
- Directive (EU) 2016/797 - OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 44–101;
- Directive (EU) 2016/798 - OJ L 138, 26.5.2016, p. 102–149;
The "governance pillar" comprises the three following documents:
- Regulation (EU) 2016/2337 - OJ L 354, 23.12.2016, p. 20–21;
- Regulation (EU) 2016/2338 - OJ L 354, 23.12.2016, p. 22–31;
- Directive (EU) 2016/2370 - OJ L 352, 23.12.2016, p. 1–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Regulation (EU) 2016/2338 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2016 amending Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 concerning the opening of the market for domestic passenger transport services by rail [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Directive (EU) 2016/2370 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2012/34/EU as regards the opening of the market for domestic passenger transport services by rail and the governance of the railway infrastructure. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. COR 3610/2013, Rapporteur: Alessandro Cosimi (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Regulation (EU) 2017/352 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2017 establishing a framework for the

 provision of port services and common rules on the financial transparency of ports (OJ L 57, 3.3.2017, p. 1) [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. COR 5650/2016, Rapporteur: Stanislaw Szwabski (PL/EA) [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. COR 1112/2012, Rapporteur: Rogier Van der Sande (NL/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. COR 2882/2016, Rapporteur: Martin Andreasson (SE/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Council conclusions on eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020: accelerating the digital transformation of government (12359/16) [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. COR 2077/2012, Rapporteur: Elisabeth Vitouch (AT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. COM(2016) 400 final [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. 14678/16 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. COM(2016) 543final [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. COR 4785/2016 (RESOL-VI/014) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. A8-0340/2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. PE-CONS 10/1/17 REV 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. 2015/2351(INI) [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. COR 4872/2015, Rapporteur: Csaba Borboly (RO/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. 13621/16 [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. COR 1536/2015, Rapporteur – Pascal Mangin (FR/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. [P8\_TA(2016)0292](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0292&language=EN&ring=A8-2016-0196) [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. [P8\_TA(2016)0333](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0333&language=EN&ring=A8-2016-0214) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. [P8\_TA(2016)0234](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0234&language=EN&ring=A8-2016-0161) [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. COR 1411/2016, Rapporteur: Daiva Matoniene (LT/ECR) [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. [P8\_TA(2016)0334](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2016-0334&language=EN&ring=A8-2016-0232) [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. COR 5368/2015, Rapporteur: Marco Dus (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. COR 1412/2016, Rapporteur: Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. P8\_TA(2016)0383 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. COR 2592/2015, Rapporteur: Kara Tüttö (HU/PES), [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. COR 1217/2014, Rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. COR 585/2016, Rapporteur: Domenico Gambacorta (IT/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. 2015/0275(COD) [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. COR 2624/2015, Rapporteur: Roby Biwer (LU/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. COR 5660/2015, Rapporteur: Andres Jaadla (LT/ALDE) [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/legal/platform\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. COR 6646/2015, Rapporteur: Ossi Martikainen (FI/ALDE) [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. COR 1415/2016, Rapporteur: Babette Winter (DE/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. [P8\_TA(2017)0207](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0207&language=EN&ring=A8-2017-0175) [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. COR 2799/2015, Rapporteur – Randel Lants (ET/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. <https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/events/rural-development-2016_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. COR 642/2015, Rapporteur Rene Souchon (FR/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. COR 2646/2014, Rapporteur: Harvery Siggs (UK/ECR) [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. SWD(2016) 205 final/2 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. COR 2712/2015, Rapporteur: Jesus Gamallo Aller (ES/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. P8\_TA(2017)0210 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Point mentioned in the CoR opinion on the European Deposit Insurance Scheme (COR 1602/2016, Rapporteur: Hans Jörg Duppré(DE/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. COR 3267/2016, Rapporteur Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. COR 5807/2016, Rapporteur Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Rapporteur Mr Bianco engaged in a debate with the MEPs and members of the national parliaments in the inter-parliamentary committee meeting entitled "The third reform of the Common European Asylum System-Up for the Challenge" held by the EP LIBE committee on 28 February 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. COM (2016) 270 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. [PE 599.751](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&mode=XML&language=EN&reference=PE599.751) [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. COR 6328/2015, Rapporteur Hans Janssen (NL/EPP) [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Council conclusions of 12 May 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. COR 6329/2015, Rapporteur: Bart Somers (BE/ALDE). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. The first study visit took place in February when a delegation of 5 MEPs and some CoR members visited Mechelen and were informed on best practices of Mechelen with regard to anti-radicalisation policies. The second took place in October with the direct participation of the Commissioner for the Security Union, Julian King. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. P8\_TA(2016)0409 [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. COR 982/2016, Rapporteur: Anne Quart (DE/PES) [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. EC Support Group for Ukraine, Congress of the Council of Europe [↑](#footnote-ref-104)