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**EN**

Brussels, 3 July 2017

**MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS BUREAU**

**11 July 2017**

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| **ITEM 9 A)****REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COR OPINIONS****– EXECUTIVE SUMMARY –***Submitted by the secretary-general* |

**FOR DEBATE**

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| **SUMMARY** |
| **Bureau meeting:** | **176** | **Date:** | **11/07/2017** |
| **Item 9 a)****Report on the impact of CoR opinions: executive summary** |
| **Type:** |
| [x]  | **Document for information / debate** |
| [ ]  | **Document for decision** |
| [ ]  | **Recommendation to the Assembly** |
| **Short description:**According to Rule 60 of the Rules of Procedure, the secretariat-general is required to submit once a year to the Plenary Assembly a report on the impact of Committee opinions based on the contributions sent to it by each competent commission and information collected from other institutions. |
| **The Bureau is invited to:*** take note of the Executive Summary of the report on the impact of CoR opinions
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| **Remarks:** None |

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| **ITEM 9 A)****REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COR OPINIONS**In 2016 the CoR undertook new ambitious horizontal and thematic initiatives with a high potential for providing meaningful input from local and regional authorities to the EU decision-making process. *Reflecting on Europe process*A core horizontal 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 action in partnership with the EU institutions, local authorities, LRA associations, think tanks and civil society organisations. The process initiated by a formal request from 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 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 was in 2016 more than ever at the centre of the CoR's activities. In particular, the CoR's Summit of Regions and Cities in Bratislava on 8-9 July 2016 gave rise to the Bratislava Declaration: Invest and Connect 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, in particular, the European Investment Bank.*Reinforced cooperation with the European Parliament*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 yearly joint meetings between the CoR COTER and EP REGI, in 2016, for the first time, the two institutions also held joint meetings between COTER and TRAN, as well as between NAT and AGRI. Therefore, the CoR's increasing capacity to influence the EP draft reports and amendments with its key messages is a sign that this strategy is beginning to produce the desired results.Moreover, following the EP's introduction of the "implementation reports" tool, the CoR is invited to play a role in contributing to the drafting of these EP reports, and in the organisation of fact-finding missions. This joint work and its combined analytical and political output will therefore help to enhance the scrutiny of specific policy implementation with a view to a possible revision of EU legislation. This cooperation will also contribute to raising 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 the implementation of the 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 REFIT Platform, in 2016 tabling two reports related to regional policy, for which the CoR had been appointed lead rapporteur. In view of the increased thematic cooperation the CoR has also undertaken efforts to consolidate its relations with the EC secretariat general. *More targeted cooperation with the Council*The necessity for better regulation offers solid grounds for developing and strengthening ties with the Council and its rotating presidencies, and provides for more transparency in the course of the EU decision-making process. The CoR's strategy is consistently geared towards more opportunities for effective active involvement in the EU trio Presidency's activities and the design of their future programmes as well as the opportunity to present CoR requests at Presidency events, Council Working Parties and Informal Council meetings.Cooperation initiatives with the Council secretariat on thematic priority subjects of the CoR commissions are also being developed. CoR opinions, as well as other relevant CoR documents (studies, consultation reports, impact assessments etc.), are presented to the relevant Council working parties. The CoR has also successfully obtained formal access to the internal Council's planning documents. |

1. **METHODOLOGY**

Under Article 60 of the Rules of Procedure, the secretariat-general shall submit a report on the impact of Committee opinions at least once a year to the plenary assembly.

A total of 45 opinions adopted in previous years, which had a significant impact on the EU's legislative activity in 2016, are included in this report. The following criteria were used to define the impact of the opinions:

* specific CoR proposals adopted in final legislation;
* CoR policy recommendations considered in proposed legislation or in legislative procedures;
* CoR positions that have made a major contribution to ongoing political debates and
* References made to CoR positions in other EU documents, e.g. resolutions of the EP.

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.

#  **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The CoR performed well in achieving political impact in 2016, resulting from targeted strategic political planning, strong engagement of members and their political groups, and better planning and follow-up for CoR opinions. This executive summary highlights a sample of the CoR's successes in 2016 in some key policy areas. The complete 2016 Impact Report can be found in the annexed document.

**Economic and monetary policy**

As outlined in the opinion on the **Follow-up to the Five Presidents' report: completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union,** the EP accepted the CoR's request to adopt a code of conduct to guarantee the structural involvement of local and regional authorities in the **European Semester.** European Commissioner Creţu announced that the Commission will take up several requests of the opinion, in particular the need to reduce regional disparities.

As regards the **2017-2020 Structural Reform Support Programme**, the CoR opinion on this topic made its way into the trilogue negotiations between the EC, the EP and the Council. After the CoR adopted its opinion in April 2016, the provisional conclusions of the trilogue agreement included two key elements of the opinion: first, the fact that the programme should be available to the local and regional authorities, and second, that it should get its own funding if maintained after 2020. These elements have been included in the final version of the SRSP Regulation, adopted by the Council on 11 May 2017.

The CoR opinion on **The local and regional dimension of the sharing economy** was the first important document focused solely on the sharing/collaborative economy by an EU body, and initial policy developments are so far in line with the CoR opinion's key recommendations, such as the Commission's intention to develop a European agenda for the collaborative economy.

In its 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 the EC addresses a number of issues raised in the CoR opinion **Steel: Preserving sustainable jobs and growth in Europe**, such as the need to use a non-standard methodology in anti-dumping and anti-subsidy investigations into Chinese imports; the recognition of steel as one of the sectors most at risk from dumped Chinese goods; and the fact that trade defence instruments may be crucial both for certain sectors or regions, although their macro-economic impact is small.

**Regional policy and EU budget**

Several CoR recommendations from the opinion on the **Investment Plan and European Fund for Strategic Investments** are reflected in the EC proposal for a Regulation extending the duration of EFSI, relating notably to: a further reinforcement of the additionality principle; the financial capacity of EFSI; the advisory services of EIAH; a reinforcement of the take-up of EFSI in less-developed and transition regions.

During the preparation of the opinion on **Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities**, 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 a report including proposals for simplification. The added value of these workshops was acknowledged in the Council conclusions on A more R&I friendly, smart and simple Cohesion Policy and the European Structural and Investment Funds. During the second annual conference on the *EU Budget Focused on Results* on 27 September 2016, the EC Director-General for Budgets considered this opinion as one of the most valuable inputs received in view of the preparations towards the Omnibus proposal.

In his Recommendation for Mandate for Trilogue on the 2017 draft budget, the EP's rapporteur on the EU Budget for 2017 underlined several points highlighted by the CoR **Resolution on the Draft Annual EU Budget for 2017.** After the adoption of the EU Budget for 2017 in the Council and the EP, these CoR recommendations were taken on board.

The EP resolution on The preparation of the post-electoral revision of the MFF 2014-2020: Parliament's input ahead of the Commission's proposal is in line with the recommendations expressed by the CoR in its opinion on the **Mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).** The EC welcomed the CoR's own-initiative opinion and indicated that the package of the mid-term review proposals addresses the main aspects of the CoR opinion.

The final Regulation on the European statistical programme 2013-2017, extending it to 2018-2020, takes on board the recommendations put forward by the CoR in its opinion on **Indicators for territorial development – GDP and beyond.** The items concern better statistics on cross-cutting issues and more integrated statistics to describe complex social, environmental and economic phenomena beyond the traditional measures of economic output.

The EC welcomed the CoR's support for the ongoing review of cross-border obstacles as outlined in the opinion **Strengthening Cross-border Cooperation: the need for a better regulatory framework?** The Commission confirmed its commitment to clarifying and publicising the role of EGTCs and confirmed that it will maintain its close and fruitful cooperation with the CoR and its EGTC platform.

The CoR opinion **Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU,** together with the CoR opinion on **Concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda,** served as a basis for shaping the content of the Pact of Amsterdam establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU presented by the Dutch presidency of the Council.

The Pact of Amsterdam "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".

**Transport and mobility**

The missing links initiative and the opinion on **Missing transport links in border regions** are a good example of the interinstitutional cooperation between the CoR, the EP and the EC. Following the discussion at the EP TRAN -CoR COTER joint meeting, the EC proposed an amendment to the CEF Transport Annual Work Programme 2016. The general envelope now includes Euro 110 million for projects on small cross border projects closing missing links.

The proposals set out in the CoR opinion on **The fourth railway package**, which supported 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 authorising vehicles that are only to be used within a country by national safety authorities, were taken into account in the final acts under the **technical pillar** of the related package.

Concerning the **governance pillar**, in line with the CoR position, the final text of the Regulation keeps the **principle of free administration**, which enables local authorities to decide how they want to organise their public transport services.

A comparison between the CoR opinion  **Framework on Future EU Ports Policy** and the final text of the regulation of the EP and of the Council establishing a framework on market access to port services and financial transparency of ports shows that a significant number of CoR recommendations for legislative amendments have been taken on board (see main report).

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# **Research and innovation**

Several points of the **eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020** opinion are reflected in the Council conclusions, adopted on 20 September 2016, particularly relating to the objectives of eGovernment, the facilitation of cross-border digital public services, openness and interactivity of eGovernment and electronic services.

# **Culture and youth**

As far as the **European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018)** is concerned, the EP report takes on board several amendments proposed by the CoR. The Council introduced several changes in the Commission proposal, some of which had been called for in the CoR resolution, such as: strengthening the role of Europeana, the EU digital platform for cultural heritage; increasing the use of media and social networks; specifying the responsibility for the Member States for organising the Year at national level; promoting a bottom-up approach with the involvement of civil society; and reinforcing cooperation with international organisations.

The EU Decision with the objective of making it possible for cities from EFTA/EEA countries to apply for the European Capital of Culture title approved by the Council and the EP is in line with the amendment proposals of the CoR opinion on **The European Capitals of Culture (2020-2033).**

The EP Resolution on the assessment of the EU Youth Strategy 2013-2015 echoes several points highlighted in the CoR opinion on **European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018)**, such as the need to actively involve young people in the planning, development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of all youth policies; the need to empower them to address the extremely serious problems they currently face; and the need to ensure that all young people have access to quality education.

**Energy and climate change**

Thanks to fruitful contacts with the EP rapporteurs, the key messages of the CoR opinion on the **Energy Union** are present in several Resolutions adopted by the EP in 2016 (i.e. on Renewable energy, on the New Energy Market, on the New deal for energy consumers).

The EP strongly agreed with the CoR's views that support should be provided for energy production and supply at local and community level, on an equal footing with other players in the energy market. The EP also recommended that implementation and interconnection of local renewable energy grids should be a vital complement to national energy policies. Structured support should be stepped up for EU initiatives and projects geared towards the local and regional level, such as the Covenant of Mayors, Smart Cities and 100% RES Communities, aiming to promote energy self-generation and energy efficiency measures, fight energy poverty, and raise awareness of the financing opportunities for LRAs.

In the area of climate policy, the opinion **Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22 in Marrakech** managed to influence the EC communication 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 to implement climate action on the ground.

The EP resolution on the implementation of the Paris Agreement includes numerous references to the role of local and regional authorities as crucial partners contributing to the achievement of the mid- and long-term climate policy goals. The EP recognised LRAs as the biggest contributors to the Lima-Paris Action Agenda and the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA), ensuring horizontal coordination and mainstreaming of climate change policy, empowering local communities and citizens, and promoting processes of societal change and innovation.

**Environment, circular economy**

Many recommendations from the CoR opinion on **Legislative proposals amending the waste directives** were reflected in the first position adopted by the EP before negotiations with the Council that are still ongoing. These include:

* Extended producer responsibility schemes;
* An increase in the proposed 2030 reuse and recycling target for municipal waste (65% to 70%);
* The possibility to set reuse and recycling targets for construction and demolition waste by 2025 and 2030;
* A definition of littering;
* Targets and restrictions to the landfill of non-hazardous waste other than municipal waste.

In line with the opinion on the **Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives,** the EC decided to adopt an Action Plan. The CoR was closely involved in the preparation of the Action Plan and invited by the European Commission to set up a joint CoR/EC platform to support knowledge exchange and engagement of local and regional authorities.

**Natural resources and tourism**

In 2016 the CoR further deepened cooperation with international organisations by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO) and an Action Plan with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

The contribution of the CoR opinion on the **Innovation and modernisation of the rural economy**

has been clearly mentioned in the new Cork 2.0 declaration, 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, was supported by the EP AGRI committee, following a joint meeting with the CoR NAT commission held in November 2016.

The CoR opinion on **Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU** raised the CoR's political profile in this field. The CoR was for the first time invited to deliver keynote speeches at the European Tourism Day 2016 and European Tourism Forum 2016. The EC invited the CoR rapporteur as member of the jury awarding the annual European Capital of Tourism Award which takes up the CoR's smart cities/regions approach. The European Parliament Tourism Task Force and the future Austrian Presidency of the Council (2018) have invited the CoR rapporteur for an exchange of views in preparation of their priorities.

**Anti-radicalisation**

The key messages of the CoR opinion **Combatting Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Prevention mechanisms at local and regional level** were taken on board by the EC, which accepted the establishment of a repository of prevention strategies at national, regional or local level and stressed the importance of action on the causes of radicalisation.

The text agreed between the EP and the Council Proposal for a Directive on combating terrorism includes references to the local level that originate from the amendments proposed by the CoR, such as:

* explicit recognition of the need to provide, where appropriate, EU-level support for national, regional and local authorities in developing prevention policies;
* the need for support for civil society organisations, private companies, local communities and other stakeholders with measures aimed at enabling them to identify and address signs of radicalisation.

**Europe as a global actor**

In 2016, the Foreign Affairs Council adopted a set of conclusions dedicated to the Eastern Partnership. These conclusions responded to the CoR position as expressed in the opinion on the **Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy.** The Council explicitly mentioned the need for local authorities to be involved in setting priorities as regards cooperation with EaP countries and reaffirmed the importance of including local authorities in the implementation of Association Agendas and Partnership Priorities.

The CoR has continued its bilateral work with **Ukraine** and is currently working with its key partners[[1]](#footnote-1) to transform political declarations into concrete initiatives supporting administrative reform and facilitating regional cooperation between the EU and Ukrainian regions and municipalities.

The **Nicosia Initiative**, launched by the CoR in 2016 as a capacity building programme aimed at strengthening Libyan municipalities and promoting their networking and cooperation with European regions, was directly appreciated by Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn, who jointly encouraged the CoR to further develop the initiative.

**PROPOSAL**

**Members of the Bureau are invited to take note of the Executive Summary of the report on the impact of CoR opinions.**

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1. EC Support Group for Ukraine, Congress of the Council of Europe [↑](#footnote-ref-1)