



**European Committee
of the Regions**

CoR Activities in 2018

Report on the Impact of CoR Opinions

Executive Summary

June 2019

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1. Introduction

2018 was the fourth year of the European Committee of the Regions' (CoR) sixth term of office 2015-2020. Our mission is to involve regional and local authorities in the European decision-making process and thus to encourage greater participation from our fellow citizens.

The CoR's political action is based on the belief that cooperation between European, national, regional and local levels is essential if we are to build and ever closer and more mutually supportive union among the people of Europe.

In that respect, the CoR intervenes at several stages of the EU law-making process, it also works closely with national, regional and local authorities and builds alliances with other institutions in order to contribute efficiently to the future of a Europe that takes citizens' concerns and needs into account.

Given the multitude of challenges for local and regional authorities, ranging from climate and demographic change, the disruptive power of new technologies and globalisation, it is also essential for the CoR that cities and regions are sufficiently supported and empowered through EU policies and funds. In this context, cohesion policy plays a key role to ensure that no citizen is left behind, wherever they live.

2018 was a very busy year and the CoR adopted 78 opinions. Content wise, the main impact analysis was prepared through debates organised in each of the six CoR commissions and is detailed in the main Annual Impact Report of the year.

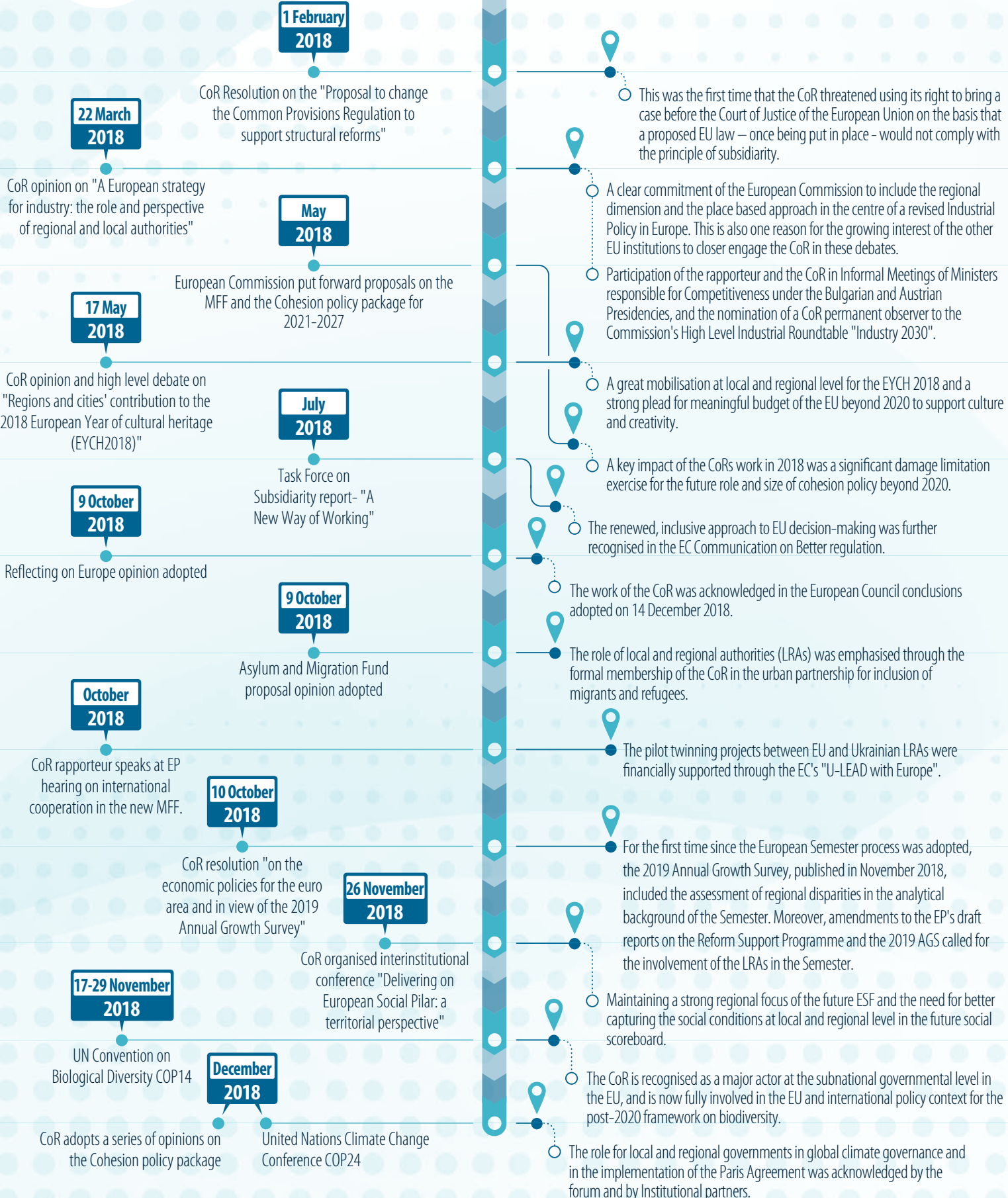
In 2018, the CoR also demonstrated its support for the European Parliament and the European Commission in its legislative work, in policy challenges as well as in cross-cutting topics. This executive summary highlights the main impact of the year.



European Committee of the Regions

PROCESS IMPACT

2. Overview of the main achievements



2.1. The year of global challenges

2.1.1. Migration Policy

While the Council talks about “migration”, at the grassroots we hear the word “integration” far more often.

On 4 December 2018, in his opening speech at the conference of the Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, co-organised by the CoR, Commissioner Avramopoulos referred to his previous experience as a Mayor and stressed the importance of integration in the coming years. He also recalled concrete best practices and examples such as the Belgian project “Interactive in Ghent” targeting low-skilled, vulnerable migrants, which aims to socially activate and integrate them in the society through language training, screening of individual competencies, and work insertion. Since then, the CoR initiative on Cities and Regions for Integration was launched in April 2019, with EU-level associations of regions and cities.

The European Commission (EC) has been increasingly supporting integration policies and efforts by EU Member States and other actors over the last years, through funding, coordination, mutual learning and exchange of good practices. In the period 2014-2020, the EU allocated almost EUR 1 billion to integration measures and more than 3 million third-country nationals have so far been supported with this dedicated funding. The CoR has repeatedly called for more and better coordinated funding for migration and integration, most recently in its opinion on the Asylum and Migration Fund proposal, adopted in October 2018.

Furthermore, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly and decentralised cooperation policy are contributing to a better management of migration through structured political dialogue with the sub-national levels in Mediterranean and other partner countries. Women and children are particularly



vulnerable and need better protection. Here, the CoR participated in the 2018 edition of the European Development Days with the slogan #ShelsWe. This placed women's perspectives at the centre of the three overarching themes: 'ensuring the physical and psychological integrity of girls and women', 'promoting the economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women', and 'strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation'. Finally, the role of local and regional authorities was emphasised through the **formal membership of the COR in the urban partnership for inclusion of migrants and refugees** and discussed with other institutional partners, such as the OECD.

2.1.2. Beyond the EU's borders: External relations, Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy

Strengthening relations and sharing good policy is in the interests of local communities and will ensure a more secure and prosperous European neighbourhood.

During 2018, the Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies renewed the EU's commitment towards the Western Balkans and enlargement policy. The CoR was actively involved through its joint consultative committees as well as the Working Group on the Western Balkans. More cooperation and coordination between the candidate countries may bring better results as well as providing inspiration and technical help at local and regional level. The CoR stressed that EU integration is an opportunity that we offer to our citizens and to our economies. The CoR emphasised that the enlargement process must continue as an EU priority and agrees with the EC that the rule of law, justice, fundamental rights and respect for and the protection of minorities must remain at the core of the process. It is crucial to involve regional and local authorities in the process, in administrative and decentralisation reforms, respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

With regard to EU Neighbourhood policy, 2018 saw strong results in particular in support of Ukraine and its decentralisation reforms. In September 2018, following the invitation of the Kyiv City Council, the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership held its 8th meeting there focusing on EU financial assistance for Eastern Partnership countries and the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument. Also in September, the Ukraine Task Force members met in Kyiv. The past year marked successful **pilot twinning projects between EU and Ukrainian local and regional authorities, financially supported through the EC's "U-LEAD**



with Europe” 97 million EUR programme. These five peer-to-peer projects implemented by CoR members and their Ukrainian partners were launched in March 2018 in the presence of the Head of the EC Support Group for Ukraine. Decentralisation reforms in the Eastern Partnership countries will remain a priority for both the EU Member States and the EC.

The CoR also developed relations with both the EC and the European Parliament (EP) in the field of external relations. In October, Hans Janssen, the CoR rapporteur on the EU financial instruments for external action, presented the point of view of European local and regional authorities in the EP’s public hearing on “Development, neighbourhood and international cooperation in the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework”. As regards Development policy, the CoR strongly advised that local and regional authorities should be given a specific separate programme with an earmarked budget for development cooperation. This view will be reflected in the new multi-annual financial framework under the heading “Neighbourhood and the world”. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires action by cities and regions too. Deepening relations with countries in the EU’s southern neighbourhood and Eastern Partnership obliges the EU to look beyond national capitals. The EU is proposing earmarking funding for civil society in 2021-2027; it should also set aside EUR 500 million for local and regional authorities, who should be partners both of civil society and of central governments. Since then the **CoR hosted in February 2019 the Cities and Regions for Development forum.**

2.1.3. Regions and cities acting locally to deliver globally: Climate change – COP24 in Katowice

The fight against climate change is also a priority for us. We have just entered into partnerships with the European Climate Alliance network and with our international partners.



Climate change and protection of the environment, together with innovative policies for sustainable and green cities, are at the heart of the CoR’s legislative work. In 2018, our members continued their cooperation with international actors and attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP24 in Katowice in December. Thanks to our cooperation with the Local Governments for Sustainability network and the Local government and municipal authorities’ focal

point to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the CoR, called for the inclusion of local and regional contributions in the national climate strategies and action plans during the Talanoa Closing Political Session in Katowice. Now, when the Paris Agreement Rulebook invites national governments to consider the inputs from the Talanoa Dialogues, local and regional authorities are given an opportunity to approach their national governments and ask for a revision of their Nationally Determined Contributions before 2020.

The role for local and regional governments in global climate governance and in the implementation of the Paris Agreement was acknowledged by the forum and by Institutional partners such as the EC, the EP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Leading the delegation, the CoR First Vice-President said that we welcome the positive intentions and trends of energy intense industries to decrease their carbon footprint. The CoR will support the development of partnerships to maximise the potential of the SET Plan and promote research and innovation while driving cooperation between the EU, Member States, regions, industry and research institutions. He also stressed that Europe's industrial transformation must be a priority of Horizon Europe and for regional and private investments. Without the decarbonisation of the industry sector, we will not be able to reach the 2030 energy and climate targets, and we will not honor our commitments under the Paris agreement. The next UNFCCC conference of the parties will take place in Santiago Chile from 2-13 December 2019.



2.1.4. Biodiversity and UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) COP14

Even the most technical opinions of the CoR can have a big impact, and without wide media coverage. Here is a case study of a lesser-known opinion that had a much bigger impact than expected.

The health and well-being of European citizens also depends on how the environment they live in is protected and how its biodiversity is preserved. Regions and cities are at the forefront in successfully implementing current and future global and European policies for the protection and conservation of biodiversity. Nature is not only precious for its intrinsic value but also provides services that are crucial for sustaining our well-being and our economy. For example, protected area networks like Natura 2000 create significant opportunities for recreation and tourism. Healthy ecosystems also provide us with vital services, such as food, fibres, clean water, and healthy soil. Meanwhile, a new policy framework should be developed for the post-2020 period. Given the large number of biodiversity-related measures that fall under the remit of cities and regions, their involvement in developing this policy matters greatly. The CoR opinion on "The contribution of EU cities and regions to the CBD COP14 and the post 2020 EU Biodiversity Strategy" is intended to contribute to this end.

Following the adoption of the CoR opinion, the rapporteur shared the text with the EC and with the Secretariat of the UN CBD, as well as with internationally recognised organisations in view of his **participation at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD COP14)** in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 17-29 November 2018. The rapporteur represented the CoR in high-level panel debates and during bilateral meetings with high-level meetings on international biodiversity. The CoR's participation at the CBD COP14 in Egypt can be considered as a great success: a very high impact for the CoR in the UN CBD COP context.

The CoR opinion on biodiversity has become well-known and appreciated by participants to the conference. Very positive feedback was received on the CoR's proposal to explicitly recognise the key role of local and regional authorities in achieving a successful implementation of current and future global and European policies on biodiversity. The CoR is recognised as a major actor at the subnational governmental level in the EU, and is now fully involved in the EU and international policy context for the post-2020 framework on biodiversity.

2.2. The year for cohesion, industrial policy and investment

2.2.1. #CohesionAlliance and Multi Annual Financial Framework (MFF)

Cohesion policy makes an essential solidarity-based contribution to consolidating the European Union and is the necessary counterpart to the internal market rules. Its future and Europe's future are interlinked.

A key impact of the CoRs work in 2018 was a significant damage limitation exercise for the future role and size of cohesion policy beyond 2020.

Following the debate launched by EC President Juncker with the White Paper on the Future of Europe on 14 February 2018, the EC put forward scenarios on the future EU budget beyond 2020. For the first time, the EC considered as an option to concentrate cohesion policy on cohesion Countries only. This would have amounted to a reduction of approximately one-third of all cohesion funds (EUR 124 billion). The CoR defended the position that EU cohesion policy must continue to represent at least one-third of the EU budget after 2020 and support all of the EU's regions. Reducing it risks deepening divides in Europe and would undermine the future of the EU. This message was delivered through an EU-wide campaign branded the #CohesionAlliance which was launched in October 2017. Since then more than **11.000 signatories endorsed the #CohesionAlliance**, covering almost the entire EU.

In May, the EC put forward a proposal for the MFF 2021-2027 with an estimated reduction in the agricultural funds of approximately 15-28%, and much lower cuts for the structural funds of 10%, which is significantly lower than the worst case scenario from February. Commissioner Cretu stated, that the #CohesionAlliance became the broadest ever coalition to plead for a strong Cohesion Policy beyond 2020.

The long-standing work of the CoR on the future of cohesion policy beyond 2020 and its alliance building finally paid off in the Commission's legislative proposals for the new cohesion policy post-2020, which took on board a number of key concerns of the CoR:

- Cohesion policy will remain available for all regions in Europe, which was one of the main concerns of the CoR and the #CohesionAlliance;
- The three categories of regions (less developed regions, transition regions, developed regions) will be maintained;
- The reinforced European Social Fund Plus will remain part of Cohesion policy and will be governed by the set of rules outlined in the Common Provisions Regulation;
- There are credible steps for simplification, more differentiation and more flexibility;

- The people to people fund ideas for cross-border co-operation has been picked up;
- The principle of multi-level governance has also been maintained in the Common Provisions Regulation.

Commissioner Günther Oettinger said that Cohesion Policy is traditional but not old fashioned and he invited all partners to convince Member States to back a limited increase in their contributions. In October, President Juncker recalled the positive role of the Cohesion Policy at the opening of the European Week of Regions and Cities. It should also be noted in this context that the CoR's consistent technical and political work over several years on the simplification of Cohesion policy also had a significant impact in 2018. In the context of the 2020-2027 MFF legislative package presented from May 2018, more than 30 of the 80 simplification measures put forward by the European Commission were based on proposals made by the CoR.

Alongside the MFF package, the CoR had also a **strong impact in the EC proposal for a Regulation on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context** which answered requests the Committee has made throughout the years on the obstacles to investment and cooperation affecting border regions. In particular with the opinions "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border regions" and "Missing transport links in border regions; Strengthening Cross-border Cooperation: the need for a better regulatory framework?".

2.2.2. Taking a political stand – Resolution on the Proposal to change the Common Provisions Regulation to support structural reforms

In January 2018, the CoR raised serious concerns about the EC's proposal to change the current rules governing EU regional funds which would divert resources from the EU's cohesion policy to support structural reforms in the Member States. The change would have allowed regions and cities' funding to be frozen. With the resolution adopted on 1 February 2018, the CoR rejected the EC's argument that the proposal to change the Common provisions Regulation currently in force complied with the subsidiarity principle. The CoR argued that the objective of cohesion policy, implemented by EU regional funds, is not to support Member States structural reform but to reduce economic and social disparities between EU regions.

In case the legislation would be adopted without substantial changes, **for the first time the CoR threatened to use its right to bring a case before the Court of Justice of the European Union** on the basis that a proposed EU law – once in place – would not comply with the subsidiarity principle.

The CoR recommended to the EP and the Council to reject the proposal. While the EP followed the CoR position in an opinion adopted in early 2019, the Council did not take a position on the proposal so far.

2.2.3. Industry as the driver of the European economy

In 2017-2018, the CoR conducted comprehensive analytical and political work to influence an EU industrial strategy that recognises the centrality of places and supports territorial ecosystems in driving industrial modernisation. Its main political output, the CoR opinion on "A European strategy for industry: the role and perspective of regional and local authorities", adopted in March, had a significant impact in the ongoing policy process. The work started in 2017,

with a study and workshop on the future of industry, followed by rapporteur's consultations, and notably with the Industry Days in early 2018, reached a wide range of EU, business and regional stakeholders, which led to alliance-building and cooperation with the **Industry4Europe coalition** (representing about 122 manufacturing associations in Europe). The CoR spoke in the Industry Days 2018 session, and hosted the seminar in Dresden on the topic of holistic industrial strategy; its participation at external conference in Bucharest on the digitalisation of SMEs was an important follow-up activity. The CoR has also worked with the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) on a study of trends in EU industry, which was later presented at a workshop on International trade and globalisation.



Results of this political work included the **participation of the rapporteur and the CoR in Informal Meetings of Ministers responsible for Competitiveness under the Bulgarian and Austrian Presidencies, and the appointment of a CoR permanent observer to the EC's High Level Industrial Roundtable "Industry 2030"** chaired by Vice-President Katainen. The CoR's work also helped to consolidate its partnerships with bodies such as the EPRS and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. In its follow-up report, the EC welcomed the CoR opinion as an important contribution to the dialogue on industrial policy, referring in particular to the recommendations on research and innovation funding, strategic European value chains, open and rules-based trade, and the role of regional ecosystems and multi-level partnership in revitalising regions and building resilience.



The direct impact of the CoR in the field of industrial policy is a clear determination of the EC to include the regional dimension and the place based approach in the centre of a revised Industrial Policy in Europe.

2.2.4. Adding a territorial dimension to the European Semester and the EU economic policy

The European Semester has become the key instrument for economic governance in the EU. Until recently this was done by purely focussing on the national level without taking into account the growing territorial disparities in the EU. Since 2012 the CoR was pleading that a stronger territorial focus is needed to capture and address the specific challenges in Europe's cities

and regions. As a result of the CoR's legislative work in 2018 the **European Semester Cycle starting in October 2018 included for the first time a more granular assessment of regional disparities** which is now part of the EU Semester. Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations address long-term investment needs, including those met by the European Structural and Investment Funds of cohesion policy.

This is clearly a success for the CoR since assessing challenges at regional level, and rebalancing the Semester with a stronger accent on long-term investment aimed at competitiveness and cohesion, have been key points. One important step in this direction was the position of the EP on the EC's proposal on re-financing the Structural Reform Support Programme and broadening its scope, whereby the EP proposed to give the programme the goal *"to support the involvement and consultation of regional and local authorities in the preparation and implementation of structural reform measures to a degree commensurate with the powers and responsibilities of those regional and local authorities within the constitutional and administrative structure of each Member State"*.

In order to involve cities and regions in the European Semester in a permanent and structured manner, the CoR continued to promote the **Code of Conduct** adopted in May 2017. This becomes even more necessary since, as of 2019, the Semester process will also address recommendations on both cohesion policy programs and the reform commitments to be incentivised under the Reform Support Programme.

The need to involve the local and regional authorities in the European Semester is one also of the **recommendations in the final report of the Commission's Task Force on "Subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently"**. The report, developing the concept of "active subsidiarity", was annexed to the EC's Communication on the subsidiarity of October 2018.

The annual analyses of the CoR on the territory-related aspects were quoted by the EP's briefing for the structured dialogue of the Members of the with the EC in Summer 2018. The CoR was invited to present its views on this point at the EP's Committee on Regional Development meeting in April 2018. These activities, as well as the CoR's exchanges with the relevant rapporteurs and shadow-rapporteurs of the EP, led in January 2019 to a series of amendments to the EP's draft report on the Reform Support Programme calling for the involvement of cities and regions in the Semester.

In April 2019, the CoR adopted an opinion on the links between cohesion policy and the European Semester under the new MFF and will keep addressing the issue of the involvement of the local and regional in the Semester with the EC, the EP and the Council.

2.3. The year for social dimension and cultural heritage

2.3.1. Social dimension

2018 was the year that the CoR devoted much attention of strengthening the social dimension of the EU. In January, **Portugal's Prime Minister, and former member of the CoR, Antonio Costa, joined hundreds of local and regional leaders in a discussion about the social policy future in Europe**. He underlined that Europe must urgently change course to respond to global competition by tackling regional disparities, increasing Member States' contributions to the EU budget, strengthening regional investment and prioritising social cohesion and convergence between regions and cities. Much



of the legislative work of the CoR in this field was focussing on how to better link the debate about the future of work with the growing disparities of the places in Europe. The CoR carried out a number of events and a study on the demographic challenges in many EU regions and highlighted the potential territorial impacts of the new legislative proposals for a better work live balance in Europe.

In November 2018 the CoR held a conference highlighting the role of cities and regions in delivering the social pillar and the future role of the European Social Funds for this. The legislative work of the CoR in this field impacted in maintaining a strong regional focus of the future European Social Fund and the need for better capturing the social conditions at local and regional level in the future social scoreboard. The work of the CoR also lead to the fact that the EC highlighted both the “Future of work and the future of place” as a key challenge for upwards convergence in the EU in a High Level Conference in 2019.

2.3.2. Regions and cities’ contribution to the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage (EYCH)

Culture must contribute to reinforcing the sentiment of belonging to the EU and cultural heritage must be considered as a strategic resource for Europe.

Cities and regions reflect Europe’s cultural diversity and are best placed to turn Europe’s cultural heritage into a strategic asset. The CoR directly contributed to celebrating 2018 as the EYCH through strong territorial component stressing the fundamental role of local and regional authorities in the management, promotion, protection and safeguarding of the EU cultural heritage.

This approach was presented during the debate in the Plenary session in May 2018, in the presence of the Commissioner Navracsics who supported the view of the CoR, recalling that strengthening a common European identity and promoting social and economic cohesion are among the objectives of the EYCH 2018 and conditions to building the Europe of tomorrow. EP Committee Chair, Ms Petra Kammerevert, said that she is convinced that an economically determined ‘European project’ alone is not sufficient for citizens to identify with the EU. She underlined the importance that European policy makers at all levels give more importance to culture and education policy.

The CoR rapporteur on “Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture” supported these views: “While education remains a national competence, the CoR strongly recommend promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and education to allow citizens to familiarise with a common European cultural heritage, European history and the processes of European integration”. Finally, the view that the cultural heritage is a strategic resource for more cohesive and sustainable regions in the EU was stressed by the CoR opinion requested by the Bulgarian Presidency. Cultural heritage embodies the EU’s motto of **‘united in diversity’** and contributes to social cohesion and quality of life and offers development opportunities for regions affected by demographic change and depopulation. Culture and cultural heritage should be better incorporated in the priorities of the EU’s future budget. As provided for in the CoR for the EYCH2018, synergies were established with others key strategic priorities, such as EU cohesion policy/structural and investments funds, education, youth, urban agenda, etc, as well as and the communication campaigns such as the #CohesionAlliance. These multi-dimensional aspects required the involvement of all CoR commissions and matched the CoR’s communication activities and support for the rapporteurs concerned.

The CoR also played a role as facilitator with the local and regional authorities and their offices in Brussels in order to encourage them to share their potential initiatives, collaborate with their national coordinators for the EYCH2018 and **support the ten initiatives by organising conferences, launching information campaigns notably in local media, or producing publications**. An information session was organised at the CoR in late 2017, followed by dedicated decentralised events at the CoR or on the ground throughout 2018. **A series of brief videos with the “testimonies” by CoR members were recorded for European Year** and posted on social media. The presentation video on EYCH2018 helped raising awareness about and encouraging the participation in the Year: “Get involved!”. On 4 May 2018, a seminar was organised jointly by the Government of Castilla y León and the CoR in Burgos (Spain) to highlight and boost the role of culture as an important resource for the future of Europe.

The impact of the work of the CoR led to a great mobilisation at local and regional level for the EYCH 2018 and a strong plea for meaningful budget of the EU beyond 2020 to support culture and creativity.

In the EC’s proposal for the EU’s next MFF, existing actions supporting European culture and creativity will be integrated into the future “Creative Europe” Programme with a budget increase. The EC also proposed to **double the budget for Erasmus and reinforce the European Solidarity Corps**. These instruments are included in the new “Investing in People, Social Cohesion & Values” cluster with a total proposed budget of EUR 139.5 billion.

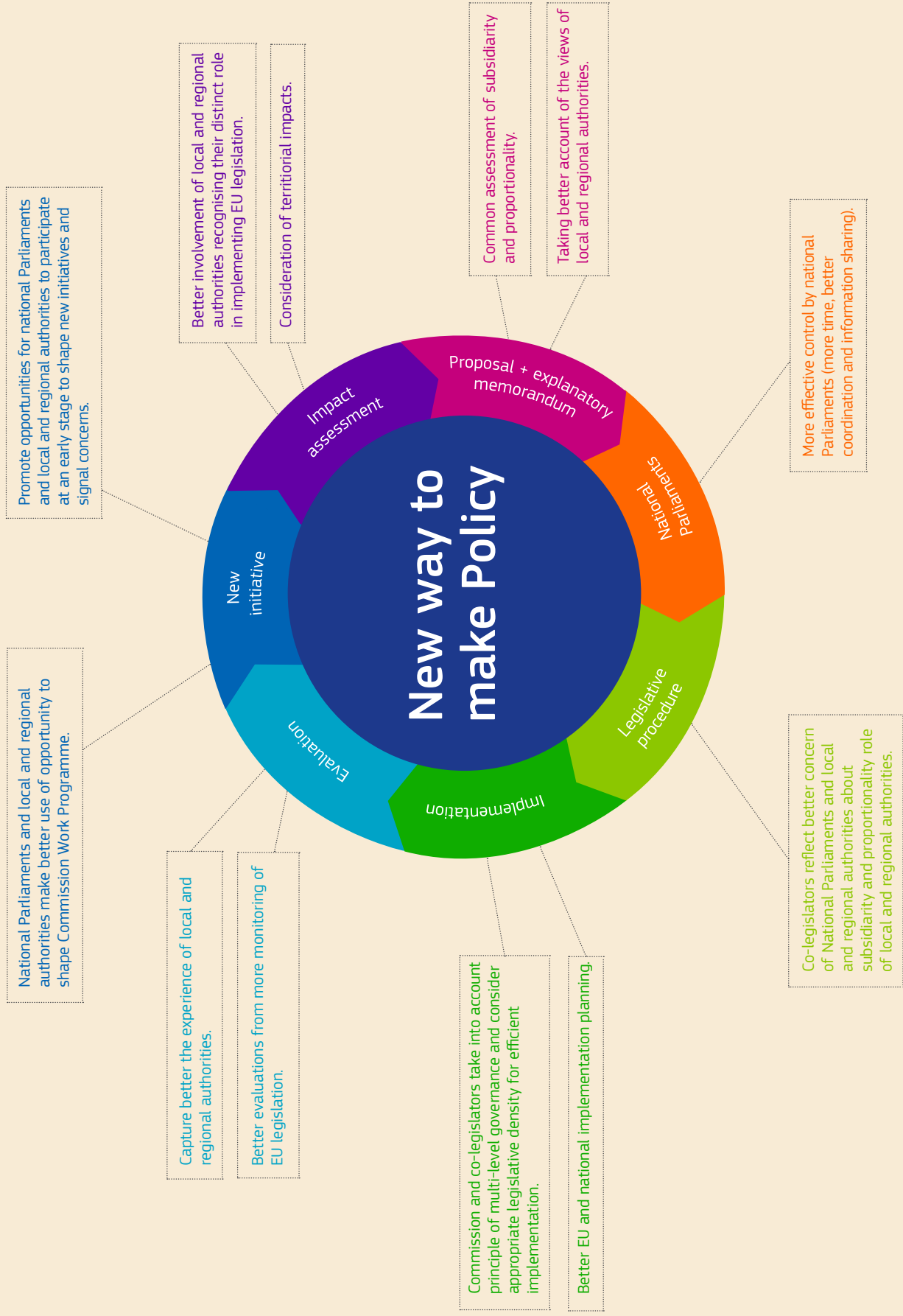
2.4. The year of active subsidiarity and reflecting on Europe

2.4.1. “A New Way of Working”

The commitment of local and regional elected representatives is rewarded by public confidence in local and regional authorities, higher in every Member State than trust in national Government.

In July 2018, the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and ‘Doing Less, More Efficiently’, chaired by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans, handed over its final report to EC President Jean-Claude Juncker. The report responded to three questions put forward by the President when creating the Task Force in November 2017: *how to apply better the subsidiarity and proportionality principles within the EU institutions; how to involve better regional and local authorities and*





national parliaments in EU policymaking and implementation; and whether there are policy areas where powers could be returned over time to Member States. On that occasion, President Juncker said that he wanted the EU to have a stronger focus on things that matter to our regions and cities and to make sure that the EU acted only where it brought a real added value. The conclusions of the Task Force were also endorsed by the EC in its Communication “The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality: Strengthening their role in the EU’s policymaking”, tabled on 23 October 2018.

Apart from promoting a common understanding of subsidiarity and proportionality through the use of a Common Assessment Grid, the **EC calls for a more active involvement of local and regional authorities in the EU decision-making process**, stating that it intends to amend its better regulation guidance to highlight the importance of capturing the views and experience of these levels of governance. These reflections have been put at the heart of the future work of the EU, also within various initiatives of the Austrian Presidency. As a follow-up, the Austrian Presidency organised a Conference on “Subsidiarity as a building principle of the European Union” on 15 and 16 November 2018 in Bregenz. The Conference brought together high-level representatives of the EU’s Institutions, the Member States, national Parliaments, local and regional authorities and regional legislative assemblies. It aimed at contributing to a more effective application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in the EU’s policy-making and responded to the recommendations of the Task Force and the subsequent Communication of the EC.

The Conference welcomed the Assessment Grid proposed by the EC on the basis of recommendations by the Task Force, building on the substantive criteria in the Subsidiarity Protocol of the Amsterdam Treaty. Looking ahead, the possibility to include the assessment grid in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making could be explored. In his closing remarks to the Conference, the Austrian Minister for EU Affairs said that “the proposals from the Task Force should be discussed by the Member States in Council as soon as possible”. **The value of this renewed, inclusive approach to EU decision-making was further recognised in the EC Communication on “Better regulation: taking stock and sustaining our commitment” on 15 April 2019**, where the EC clearly states that better regulation cannot be complete unless it is a shared effort between all actors. The Communication was followed by a conference on better regulation where Mr Olgierd Geblewicz, rapporteur for the CoR opinion on the Better regulation Communication, presented the contributions that Europe’s regions and cities, and the CoR as their institutional representative, can make in developing efficient EU laws that bring real added value to its citizens.

2.4.2. “Reflecting on Europe”

We firmly believe that it is by addressing citizens’ expectations that suspicion of Europe will be replaced by a desire for Europe.

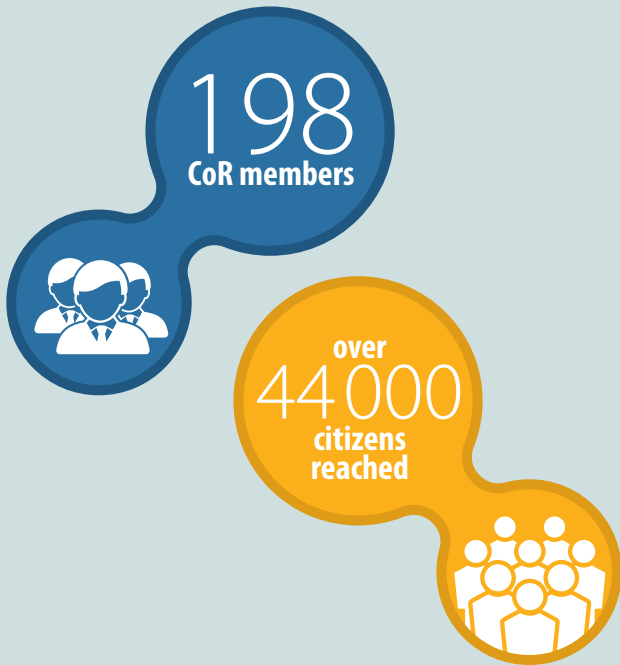
In late 2016, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, asked the CoR to submit its recommendations on the future of Europe, asking for “a real perception of the reality from the European grassroots level”. Subsequently, the CoR launched its “Reflecting on Europe” campaign whereby members held local events with citizens in their regions and cities to hear their views. **Over 40,000 citizens shared their views, concerns and ideas in more than 200 local debates organised across Europe.** Complemented by an EU-wide online survey and consultation of local and regional authorities, this feedback formed the basis of an opinion led by the CoR’s President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, and the First Vice-President, Markku Markkula entitled *“Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union”*. The opinion was adopted during the CoR plenary on 9 October 2018 shortly after the President, Mr Lambertz, gave his second “State of the Union: view of regions and cities” speech. The results are also presented in a final report entitled *“Reflecting on Europe. How Europe is perceived by people in regions and cities”* as the CoR’s contribution to the December 2018 European Council.

Following one of the key messages of the Opinion, on 14 December 2018 **CoR President Mr Lambertz and EESC, President, Mr Jahier presented a proposal on “Bringing the EU closer to its citizens: The call for an EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens”**. Responding to the European Council, the idea is to establish an EU permanent structured consultation with citizens, cities, regions and civil society organisations during the next EU institutional cycle, building upon the experience developed in the Committees, other EU institutions and Member States. **The work of the CoR in this area was acknowledged in the European Council conclusions adopted on 14 December 2018: “The European Council welcomes the holding of Citizens’ Dialogues and Citizens’ Consultations, which was an unprecedented opportunity to engage with European citizens and which could serve as an inspiration for further consultations and dialogues”**. Since then, the CoR has begun a series of seminars and workshops to exchange best practice on dialogues and consultations ahead of a possible permanent consultation mechanism being established in Autumn 2019.

The views of local and regional authorities on the future of Europe were shared with members of the EP, as well as with regional and national parliaments, through the CoR’s cooperation with the EP’s Committee on Constitutional Affairs which led to the organisation of an exchange of views between the EP and the CoR in November 2018. The importance of a stronger involvement of local and regional authorities in the EU policy cycle and the inclusion of the territorial dimension in EU policies emerge as clear priorities, not only from the findings of the “Reflecting on Europe” campaign, also from the final report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity mentioned above. Eurobarometer findings also show that local and regional authorities are typically the level of government most trusted by the electorate.

Finally, the good cooperation between the CoR and the EP shows the value of working together to find a more coherent and consistent way of engaging citizens in the European political conversation. As the President of the EP, Mr Tajani highlighted in the October 2018 CoR Plenary, members of the EP and of the CoR are elected at the European, local and regional level and due to the direct link with citizens, they are in a privileged position to bring the institutions closer to citizens. This cooperation continued in the run up to the European Elections in May 2019.

Local events key figures



Cooperation with EU institutions

48

European Direct Information Centers (EDICs)

21

European Commission Representations

3

EU Commissioners as speakers in local events: *Pierre Moscovici, Corina Crețu and Elżbieta Bieńkowska*

The President of the European Commission, *Jean-Claude Juncker*

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Members of European Parliament as speakers in local events





European Committee of the Regions

Created in 1994, after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 350 regional and local representatives from all 28 Member States, representing over 507 million Europeans. Its mission is to involve regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council consult the Committee in policy areas affecting regions and cities. It can appeal to the Court of Justice of the European Union if its rights are infringed or it believes that EU law infringes the subsidiarity principle or fails to respect regional or local powers.

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