



**European Committee
of the Regions**

CoR Activities in 2017

Report on the Impact of CoR Opinions

July 2018

Brussels, 22 June 2018

184th MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS BUREAU

- 3 JULY 2018 -

ITEM 9A)

**COR ACTIVITIES IN 2017
REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF COR OPINIONS**

Submitted by the Secretary General

FOR DEBATE

SUMMARY

Bureau meeting: 184

Date: 3/7/2018

Item 9a)

**CoR activities in 2017
Report on the impact of CoR opinions**

Type:

- Document for information / debate**
- Document for decision**
- Recommendation to the Assembly**

Short description:

This main report is the attachment to the *Report on the impact of CoR opinions: executive summary* document.

The Bureau is invited to:

- take stock of the Report on the impact of CoR opinions

Remarks:

N/A

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1 Introduction

As a consultative body to the European institutions, the impact of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) largely depends on the ability of the Committee and its members to provide the necessary input into the legislative process at the right time and in the right place.

To achieve this, it is important to combine the long-term political priorities of the CoR – which were set out at the beginning of the mandate – with day-to-day dialogue and cooperation with the other EU institutions.

2017 was a year of change and renewal for the Committee. At the head of the institution, the President, Markku Markkula, and the first Vice-President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, exchanged roles in the middle of the year, which also marked the half-way point of the current mandate. In September 2017, new chairs of the six commissions also took up their role.

This document shows that the work of the CoR spans far wider than its contribution to EU legislation. In addition to its formal role of adopting opinions and resolutions, the Committee acts as a showcase for what regions and cities are capable of achieving together. This ranges from the annual Award for the European Entrepreneurial Region to practical cooperation projects in countries neighbouring the EU.

The formal work of the Committee includes:

- setting its agenda at an early stage on topics where EU action would be needed;
- providing feedback of direct experiences of how EU regulation and policies work at local and regional level and;
- encouraging dialogue and exchange of experiences with and between local and regional authorities in Europe.

The Committee therefore organises or contributes to conferences, local events, studies, workshops and open citizens' dialogues that have the power to inspire people and influence their lives.

Bearing this in mind, our impact can be separated into four types:

The first consists of concrete proposals made by the Committee that were taken up in the final decision on EU legislation. The contribution of the CoR to the new financial regulation or the proposals for simplifying cohesion policy and revising the common agricultural policy in the EU are among the examples of this kind of impact in 2017. Even a single contribution, like the opinion¹ on the "Conservation of fishery resources and the protection of marine ecosystems through technical measures", can have a strong impact, in this case leading to the European Parliament banning electric fishing.

A second type of impact is achieved through the policy recommendations made by the CoR. Examples include the suggestions of the Committee linked to promoting smart specialisation strategies or boosting broadband connectivity, particularly in rural areas. In 2017, we actively influenced the "Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders to Deliver the Paris Agreement at all Levels" at COP23 in November 2017. The vital contributions of the CoR were also mentioned in the official COP23 press release.

Third, through political debates, policy work and the activities of Committee members, we contribute to the ongoing political debate. For example, in the last year our (ongoing) efforts were focused on

¹ NAT-VI/011 - Technical measures in fisheries – rapporteur: Emily Westley (UK/PES).

maintaining a strong cohesion policy in the future budget of the EU. Through the #CohesionAlliance campaign and in full partnership with other European-level associations, we were able to raise awareness of the importance of cohesion funding. We engaged with members of the Commission as well as leading representatives of the Member States and from the European Parliament several times at our plenary sessions.

Finally, external references to our work are a fourth way that the Committee has measurable influence. There were many press references to our projects and opinions on cross-border transport issues, as well as for cross-border people-to-people projects influencing the debate and eventual revision of European Territorial Co-operation.

However, the CoR also brings about visible change beyond those areas: the "Nicosia initiative of support for Libyan municipalities", as one example, supported a workshop on Positive Peace for Youth, which resulted in the re-establishment of the only radio station in the town of Sirte in Libya. Together with UNICEF and the European Endowment for Democracy, the event empowered Ali, a young Sirte resident, to gather the knowledge and funding necessary to restore the radio station.

Continuing our efforts to empower local communities in Europe, the Committee and its commissions concentrate on the main political priorities set for the institution for the current mandate. These five priorities are reflected through the chapters of this report.

We start with our priority to enhance sustainable growth of the European economy at the local level. In order to gain the strong influence needed to truly improve the quality of citizens' lives, several far-reaching alliances were established in 2017. The #CohesionAlliance campaign alone engaged more than 5000 signatories², from private persons to cultural associations and universities as well as the regions and cities themselves.

Secondly, we look at the result of the Committee's work aimed at emphasising the territorial dimension in EU legislation. From providing opinions from the EU's regions and cities to encouraging cross-border cooperation programmes, the Committee and its commissions make an essential contribution to the legislative process in all areas.

The theme of the third chapter is how to facilitate better involvement of citizens in the work of the EU. One step towards reaching this goal was the promotion of greater use of territorial impact assessments (TIA) and the TIA quick scan methodology, not just in the Committee itself but especially in cooperation with the European Commission (EC). The information obtained through this procedure is the basic step towards clarifying the real needs of the regions affected by a potential new EU law.

Aside from a strong economy, more effective legislation and a more democratic and uncomplicated European Union, the Committee is also putting its energy into strengthening stability inside Europe and with our neighbours. For example, the Committee hosted the first public participation of a representative of the European Migrant Advisory Board within the framework of the Urban Agenda Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees. Making their voices heard in the public discussion is an important way of fostering better understanding of the causes of migration and of improving European migration policies.

The setting-up of a Broadband Platform aims to provide a political forum for local and regional authorities, and rewarded the Committee's efforts and commitments towards ensuring connectivity for all EU territories and reducing the digital divide with a view to completing the Digital Single Market.

² As of May 2018.

Furthermore, as a result of its long-standing involvement in the debate on EU trade and globalisation and its call for increased transparency in trade negotiations and the consultation of local and regional authorities, the Committee will now be represented in the EU expert group on EU trade agreements.

At the end of the report, we highlight the Committee's priority of future partnerships between the EU and its citizens.

Looking ahead towards the European Parliament elections in 2019 and the opportunity for all Europeans to choose the path of a joint future together, the Committee and its commissions were able to gather valuable feedback from citizens. This was enabled not only by the Committee's citizens' dialogues but also by the online survey on the "Reflecting on Europe" process, as well as through the "Have your say on Europe" mobile app. The latter alone has so far received around 20 000 responses.

The CoR and its commissions made a strong contribution to the decisions and actions in the European Union in 2017. This report takes a closer look at the different types of impact resulting from those actions.

2 Detailed impact report based on the Committee's 5 political priorities

2.1 A fresh start for the European economy

Creating jobs and sustainable growth in cities and regions to provide a better quality of life for citizens

2.1.1 Future Cohesion Policy

Main impact:

- strong synergies between positions on the future of cohesion policy;
- launch of the #CohesionAlliance campaign;
- significant number of the Committee's recommendations taken up in the final text of the Omnibus Regulation;
- change in working methods with higher involvement of the Committee within the early stage of EU legislative process.

In line with its priorities for 2017, the political work of the Committee focused on the **Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020**. Further to a study and reflection project on the matter, launched in December 2015 with the intention of starting the discussion at an early stage, and which was closed with a final conference in March 2016, the Committee was the first European institution to adopt a position on the future of cohesion policy with its landmark opinion³.

Based on this early adoption of a position by the Committee, the following impacts can be outlined to date:

- high-level cooperation with the Visegrad group countries plus Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia (V4+4) during the external COTER/V4+4 meeting in March 2017 in Warsaw involving 8 ministers and deputy prime ministers as well as Commissioner Crețu, and the V4+4 ministerial meeting in Budapest in January 2018 with Commissioners Oettinger and Thyssen, resulting in strong synergies between positions on the future of cohesion policy;
- together with the main European territorial associations (AER, AEBR, CALRE, CEMR, CPMR, and EUROCITIES), the launch of the #CohesionAlliance⁴ during the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) 2017, with the objective of sending a clear message to decision-makers on the importance of securing a strong cohesion policy for all regions beyond 2020. The aim is in particular to influence the EC's proposal for the **Multannual Financial Framework (MFF) post 2020** (presented in May 2018) and the subsequent negotiations, which ideally should be concluded by June 2019. By May 2018, more than 350 organisations and more than 5000 individual supporters had joined the #CohesionAlliance. On 22 March 2018, the preliminary results of the #CohesionAlliance were handed over to Commissioners Oettinger and Crețu by the CoR President Karl-Heinz Lambertz and high-level political representatives of the European territorial associations. The political and communication efforts of the #CohesionAlliance significantly contributed towards raising the awareness among the media, including leading national newspapers in a number of Member States, and decision-makers on the future of cohesion policy, and helped to kick off a public debate and push key players to adopt and explain their position on this crucial topic. The

³ COTER-VI/015 - The Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 – rapporteur: Michael Schneider (DE/EPP).

⁴ www.cohesionalliance.eu

intense and coordinated work on social media has prepared, mirrored, amplified and reinforced these efforts. The #CohesionAlliance will continue its political communication in 2018, specifically targeting the high-level events related to the discussion on the future MFF in the first half of the year;

- a strong impact on the position of the European Parliament on the future of cohesion policy thanks to the very fruitful cooperation with the EP's REGI Committee and the EP rapporteur on "Building blocks for a post-2020 EU Cohesion Policy", Kerstin Westphal (DE/S&D). Consequently, the EP resolution⁵ on the matter took a similar position on many key aspects as the Committee, in particular on:
 - the importance and the added value of cohesion policy;
 - the validity of the current structure with its three categories of regions;
 - the need to strengthen the partnership principle;
 - the need for greater flexibility without impacting on the strategic orientation and planning certainty of multi-annual programmes for regional and local authorities;
 - the rejection of macro-economic conditionalities, the need for simplification; and
 - the need to increase the visibility of cohesion policy, among other things.
- reinforced cooperation with a number of Member States in discussing and developing the national debates on the future of cohesion policy in close cooperation with the national delegations.

The work of the CoR and the #CohesionAlliance has without any doubt contributed to a much more positive climate with regard to cohesion policy in the political debate and helped to fend off the detrimental proposals that had been put on the table with the various scenarios in the White Paper on the Future of Europe.

On 2 May 2018, the EC presented its proposal for the next MFF for the years 2021-2027, which will form the basis for the negotiations in the European Parliament and the Council in the months to come. Whilst the MFF proposal suggests significant cuts to cohesion policy (minus 12% for regional development and cohesion, minus 6% for the new ESF+), these reductions are less severe than initially expected (scenarios of a 15% or 30% reduction of the cohesion policy envelope in the Reflection Paper on the Future of EU Finances).

On 29-30 May 2018, the MFF proposal was followed up by the presentation of the legislative proposals for cohesion policy post-2020, where the positive results of the CoR's efforts can be seen:

- cohesion policy will be available for all regions in Europe;
- the three categories of regions (less developed regions, transition regions, developed regions) will be maintained;
- there are credible steps for simplification, more differentiation and more flexibility;
- the people to people fund idea for cross-border cooperation has been picked up;
- the principle of multi-level governance has also been maintained in the Common Provisions Regulation.

⁵ European Parliament resolution of 13 June 2017 on building blocks for a post-2020 EU cohesion policy (2016/2326(INI)), Kerstin Westphal (DE/PES)).

Both the MFF proposal and the cohesion policy proposal reflect the request of the CoR to better consider the role of cities and urban areas, by providing for an increased focus on sustainable urban development (6% of ERDF resources compared to 5% in the current period), to be delivered through integrated tools (ITI and CLLD), and proposing budgetary support to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

The Committee's work on the **simplification of cohesion policy** and in particular its opinion on **Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities**⁶ significantly influenced the preparation of the **Omnibus proposal**⁷, which the Committee commented on in its opinion on **The financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union**⁸. The final compromise text of the Omnibus Regulation was agreed upon in April 2018 whereby a significant number of the Committee's recommendations were taken up:

- increased proportionality and legal certainty with regard to audit requirements;
- improved operational flexibility, for example with regard to certain criteria relating to eligibility of expenditure;
- greater clarity with regard to certain conditions of use of ESI funds with EIB financial products.

The Committee's rejection of the EC's proposal on the possibility of transferring resources from cohesion policy to other centrally managed programmes, or to increase the risk-bearing capacity of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), was upheld by the co-legislator, together with the rejection of a number of other similar mechanisms, such as the establishment of trust funds for internal policies.

Furthermore, the Committee had some significant impact in the debate at national and European level with regard to the simplification of cohesion policy:

- a number of joint proposals on simplifying cohesion policy such as: a single rule book, single auditing principle, etc. were identified in the three workshops co-organised with the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies of the Council, which also fed into the post-2020 recommendations adopted in July 2017 by the High Level Group on Simplification set up by the EC;
- the Committee was specifically invited by Commissioner Crețu to express its views on the post-2020 recommendations and was the only external organisation invited to attend the final meeting of the High Level Group on 30 November 2017;
- the Committee also used the **REFIT platform** to take on board key demands of the Committee of the REFIT opinion on simplification of ESIF in the context of ETC. Furthermore, the Committee had an impact on the working methods of the REFIT platform by organising and hosting for the first time a joint follow-on workshop with members from the REFIT stakeholder platform and the platform of the Member States as well as other partners on the simplification of European Territorial Co-operation.

⁶ COTER-VI/012 - Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities – rapporteur: Petr Osvald (CZ/PES).

Detailed impact of this opinion is developed under the point 2.2.10 of the report (see below).

⁷ COM(2016) 605 final.

⁸ COTER-VI/020 The financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union– rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE).

All these efforts were seen by the EC, the EP and a number of Member States as a timely and relevant input into the debate on simplification in the current funding period as well as for the future of cohesion policy beyond 2020.

2.1.2 Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and economic governance

Main impact:

- Commissioner Moscovici agreed on the priorities set in the Committee opinion on the "EC Reflection paper on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union" as a way to relaunch investment and support the delivery of quality public services;
- the Code of Conduct relating to the European Semester received the explicit support of the European Parliament;
- raised awareness of the need to involve local and regional authorities in EU economic governance and to analyse the uneven territorial impact of EU and national policies;
- concerning the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP), the Committee proposal that the programme also be available to local and regional authorities was accepted in the final version of the programme.

The Committee has contributed to the debate on the **future of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)** since its opinion on the Five Presidents' Report (April 2016).

In two opinions on this topic adopted in 2017 the Committee recommended that a fiscal capacity be created to help achieve stability, convergence, growth and jobs by providing the EMU with a temporary shock absorption mechanism; this point was also referred to in the Committee resolutions on the 2017 Annual Growth Survey and the European Semester⁹. Such fiscal capacity should not entail permanent transfers and should complement cohesion policy without overlapping with it. The Committee also opposed the idea that the EMU fiscal capacity be a heading in the EU budget, which remains at 1.23% of EU gross national income. The Committee also recommended the swift completion of the Banking Union, asked to consider the possibility of additional EU funding tools to support structural reforms, and recommended turning part of the European Stability Mechanism into an integrated European instrument and establishing a convergence code.

Proposals by the Committee were well received by the Commissioners concerned.¹⁰ At the November 2017 plenary, the adoption of the opinion on the EC reflection paper on deepening the economic and monetary union was preceded by an exchange between Committee members and Commissioner Moscovici, who agreed on the priorities set in the opinion as a way to relaunch investment and support the delivery of quality public services. Commissioner Moscovici confirmed that the European Commission would take on board the Committee proposals when submitting the proposals for the MFF. The debate between the Committee and the Commission will continue in 2018 when the

⁹ Resolution on the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey 2017 (RESOL-VI / 019), adopted on 8 February 2017, and Resolution on the 2017 European Semester and in view of the 2018 Annual Growth Survey (RESOL-VI / 025), adopted on 9-11 October 2017,.

¹⁰ See letters of reply from VP Dombrovskis and Commissioner Moscovici of 2 and 15 March 2007 welcoming the CoR's support for the steps taken by the Commission and agreeing on the importance of implementing structural reforms to increase the resilience of the Member States' economies.

Commission will make further proposals on the completion of the EMU and for a new MFF post-2020, including on how to fund the new stabilisation function for the euro area.

In May 2017, the Committee proposed a **Code of Conduct**¹¹ to give the European Semester a territorial dimension, (a) at the analytical level (in the Annual Growth Survey (AGS), National Reform Programmes and Country-Specific Recommendations), and (b) at the operational level, by providing for stronger and systematic involvement of local and regional authorities. Country-level provisions implementing the Code of Conduct should be left to the Member States, to respect their constitutional frameworks and division of powers across levels of government. This idea of a Code of Conduct, already made in the Committee resolutions on the 2016 European Semester, received the explicit support of the EP in its resolution on the 2016 European Semester (adopted 26 October 2016).

The EC, although not considering the Code of Conduct as necessary, is more open to the Committee's argument of the need to involve local and regional authorities in EU economic governance and to analyse the uneven territorial impact of EU and national policies. This new awareness emerges from both the Commission's follow-up of the Committee opinion (15 November 2017) and its 2018 AGS (22 November 2017). The new AGS, in particular, highlights the importance of stronger and more efficient public institutions and the need to improve the quality of public administration (which includes all layers of government). It also stresses that structural reforms need to take into account distributional aspects "on different societal groups and regions".

The proposal to grant incentives from the EU budget to Member States engaging in complex multi-annual structural reforms, accompanied by a considerable increase in the financial envelope available to the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) to provide technical assistance for those reforms, was presented by the EC as part of the EMU package published on 6 December 2017¹². This proposal received a first critical reaction from Committee members, other regional representatives and think-tanks at the Committee workshop on "Challenges and incentives in the implementation of structural reforms: the role of local and regional authorities" on 14 December 2017. The proposal of financial incentives in exchange for structural reforms was then rejected by the Committee in its opinion on "**The amended SRSP and new budgetary instruments for the euro area**"¹³, adopted on 22 March 2018, on the grounds that the proposed centralised and top-down mechanism would exclude local and regional authorities, would divert funds from cohesion policy and would not help to increase ownership of structural reforms. The Committee rapporteur-general for this opinion was invited to present the Committee position at a hearing of the European Parliament REGI Committee to discuss the proposed changes to the SRSP. As far as the SRSP is concerned, the Committee proposal that the programme also be available to local and regional authorities was accepted in the final version of the programme and was reiterated in the Committee opinion mentioned; at the REGI hearing, the director in charge of the SRSP confirmed that this is still the view of the Commission.

The establishment of a European Investment Stabilisation Function, presented on 31 May 2018 by the EC, reflects requests by the CoR to make sure that even in times of severe crisis investments are not cut further, which would have the effect of exacerbating the crisis even further.

¹¹ ECON-VI/019 - Improving the governance of the European Semester: a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities – rapporteur: Rob Jonkman (NL/ECR).

¹² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5005_en.htm.

¹³ ECON-VI/031 - The amended SRSP and new budgetary instruments for the euro area – rapporteur: Olga ZRIHENZrihen (BE/PES)).

In the proposal for a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund the EC addresses a number of issues raised by the CoR in its opinion on the reflexion paper on harnessing globalisation. These issues include a simplified approval procedure, lowering the thresholds for triggering the fund and increasing both the funds available as well as the co-financing rate by aligning it with that of the ESF+.

In line with the CoR call to involve all levels of government, the legislative proposal for a Reform Support Programme (RSP) published on 31 May 2018 states that it would be up to the Member States to decide whether to apply for RSP intervention "in light of the possibilities available at national, regional and local level". In its proposal to double the financial endowment of the SRSP 2018-2020 (6 December 2017), the EC had accepted the CoR point that the capacity-building programme should be open to all levels of government.

The proposal for the establishment of the InvestEU programme, presented on 6 June 2018, appears to answer some of the CoR's key concerns. Simplification of the use of financial instruments in particular is a long-standing demand of the Committee, which the centralisation and streamlining of different programmes within InvestEU are expected to bring. The CoR has also highlighted that strengthening administrative capacity and institutional expertise of public authorities is a crucial factor in order to foster broader and more effective use of financial instruments. The proposed InvestEU Advisory Hub could play a significant role in this regard.

The new Single Market Programme proposed on 8 June delivers on some key CoR recommendations, in particular that the COSME successor programme has to be strengthened and that the transparency and synergies between various tools and financial instruments available for SMEs have to be improved.

2.1.3 Civil protection

Main impact:

- The opinion on the "Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030"¹⁴ had asked for the EU co-financing rates for regional investments after disasters to be increased. This decision was finally taken by the co-legislators, enabling the Committee to announce the positive impact of its work.

This decision means easier access for cities and regions to rebuild destroyed infrastructure, an important success for the Committee to the benefit of local and regional authorities. The decision was taken during a field visit organised by the NAT commission for the Committee Conference of Presidents to the Italian regions that were heavily affected by the 2016 earthquakes, demonstrating the Committee's sympathy and solidarity with those regions.

In relation to the NAT commission's alliance-building, links with the European Investment Bank (EIB) were reinforced, leading to joint preparations for two workshops, one during the EWRC organised by the EIB and one high-level political event where the EIB presented the financing opportunities for cities and regions. Moreover, the participation of a delegation of the Committee at

¹⁴ NAT-VI/015 - Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies – rapporteur Adam Banaszak (PL/ECR).

the European Forum of Disaster Risk Reduction was a clear sign of the commitment of the Committee in this field.

2.1.4 Research and Innovation

Main impact:

- increased Research and Innovation budget;
- development of the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP);
- strengthened insitutional role in the context of the development of smart specialisation;
- decision to launch the pilot project "Science meets Parliaments/Science meets regions" in 2018.

Although the 2017 State of the Union address and the EC Work Programme 2018 do not mention research and innovation (R&I) policy at great length or in great depth, it is clear that this will be a major topic in relation to Europe's current overall competitiveness, as well as a topic more specifically related to the debates surrounding the next MFF. The Trio Presidency is mainly focusing on access to research results, better inclusiveness of R&I infrastructure, open science and the transfer of knowledge and skills.

The SEDEC commission, similar to the European Parliament ITRE Committee, decided to simultaneously address the FP8 mid-term review and the forthcoming FP9 via an own-initiative opinion.

The Committee has addressed the Framework Programme 8 mid-term review and the forthcoming Framework Programme 9 (FP9) via an own-initiative opinion on the "Local and Regional Dimension of the Horizon 2020 Programme and the New Framework Programme for Research and Innovation"¹⁵. The Committee rapporteur, together with the European Parliament rapporteur Soledad Cabezón Ruiz (ES/S&D), suggested an increase in the current R&I budget to at least EUR 120 billion. Moreover, she called for a new approach and a programme from the FP9 budget dedicated to "territorial connections" making use of existing innovation potential and research achievements that are to be found within local and regional R&I ecosystems. All key EC DGs involved in the planning of FP9, such as DG RTD, GROW, REGIO and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), as well as major associations, undertook targeted consultations and invited the rapporteur and Mr Markkula to their respective meetings and events held in 2017. The first indications coming out of the general MFF proposal of 2 May 2018 indicate that the R&I budget might be increased to up to EUR 100 billion, i.e. a 20% increase from the previous framework programme. All of this is a step in the direction of the proposals made by the CoR.

As a follow-up to the most recent Committee opinion on R&I, and in anticipation of the forthcoming MFF negotiations, a major conference on "Connecting territories: the role of European regions and cities in the future EU policies for research and innovation" was held on 20 February 2018 in Brussels. The outcome of this mobilisation will be pursued in the context of the next European

¹⁵ SEDEC-VI/026 - [Local and Regional Dimension of Horizon 2020 and the New Framework Programme for Research and Innovation – rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau \(FR/PES\)](#).

Commission communications on the forthcoming FP9 and, possibly, some more specific initiatives relating to R&I funding dedicated to security, e-health, and the digital and urban agendas.

The added value of the **Knowledge Exchange Platform**, whose main objective, in cooperation with DG RTD, is to present new R&I solutions, innovative products and best practices implemented at local and regional level, has been recognised as a key instrument to reach out and mobilise new regional and local policy-makers and actions across Europe.¹⁶

In March 2017, the Committee adopted the opinion on **Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3): impact for regions and inter-regional cooperation**.¹⁷ In conjunction with the EP (report of the vice-President Mr Valcárcel Siso)¹⁸ and DG REGIO it was possible to profile the concept of smart specialisation as a key strategy for the future in order to:

- combine EU research funding with the use of the ESI funds;
- link the efforts for modernising European industry at local and regional level; and
- boost local and regional solutions for the energy transition.

Following the Committee recommendation to foster interregional cooperation, the EC has decided to explore the possibility of extending the forms of financing available to support interregional cooperation. Finally, the Committee participates in the work of the S3 Platform Steering Committee meetings, where all aspects regarding development of smart specialisation are discussed.

The EC Communication on "Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth"¹⁹, which was published in July, referred to the Committee opinion as one of the documents which highlighted the need to raise the innovation potential of all regions in Europe. The Committee opinion on the communication adopted in May 2018²⁰ reinforces the relevance of a smart specialisation strategy 2.0 as a catalyst for innovation policy based on interregional cooperation.

European regions and cities have been put on the agenda of the 2017 "Science meets Regions" initiative. In November 2017, a Science meets Region conference was indeed organised by the Committee on the topic of "Maximising the Impact of Science for Regions and Cities in Current and Future EU policies". Prior to this conference, several national and regional events took place organised by Committee members in their regions and cities.

¹⁶ The European Commission's Staff Working Document on the "Review of the 2012 European Bioeconomy Strategy", published on 13 November 2017, makes reference to both CoR opinions on the bioeconomy and to the Knowledge Exchange Platform (KEP), the first theme of which was the bioeconomy.

¹⁷ SEDEC-VI/021 - Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3): impact for regions and inter-regional cooperation (CDR 6963/2016) – rapporteur: Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA).

¹⁸ Cohesion Policy and Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3) (CDR 2278/2015 (INI)) – rapporteur: Ramon Luis ValcarelValcárcel Siso (ES/EPP).

¹⁹ COM(2017) 376 final.

²⁰ SEDEC-VI/032 - Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth – rapporteur: Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA).

The "Science meets Parliament/Science meets Regions" trilateral initiative between the EP, the EC and the CoR successfully evolved in its third year as an alliance bringing together representatives of EU regional authority policy-makers from all levels of government and scientists to exchange views on evidence-informed decision-making processes. Based on these positive best practices, the EP has decided to fund a pilot project "Science meets Parliaments/Science meets Regions" in 2018, and has entrusted the JRC with its implementation, which will be conducted in close cooperation with the Committee.

2.1.5 Energy Union, climate change and the Covenant of Mayors

Energy Union

Main impact:

- the request for a permanent multi-level energy dialogue platform gathering local authorities, civil society organisations, the business community, investors and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the different options envisaged for energy and climate policies has been taken into account by the EP (objective 1);
- the Committee's concerns led the final declaration of the informal ministerial council and the ministerial conference (September 2017) to put emphasis on the required support for interoperable smart homes, cities and grids (objective 3);
- the Committee's recommendation to rely on local and regional authorities notably regarding an integrated approach to electricity and gas network management was taken on board by the European Commission (objective 4).

In the area of the **Energy Union** the ENVE commission structured its energy-related activities energy in 2017 around the following key objectives:

- to increase the role and involvement of the Committee and local and regional authorities in the process of implementation of ambitious sustainable energy goals;
- to contribute towards the framing of better conditions for local and regional sustainable energy investment;
- to strengthen links and synergies between energy and economic policies, notably research and innovation as well as competitiveness, growth and jobs in general;
- to ensure that the interests of regional development and environmental protection are taken into account in the context of EU energy infrastructure policy.

Objective 1. The Committee has been cooperating closely with the EP rapporteurs on the 2016 Winter package on the Energy Union, achieving the support of the EP, in its position voted in late 2017, for a series of legislative amendments and policy recommendations put forward by the Committee, which have been taken on board by the EP. For example, in January 2018 the EP adopted an amendment asking for "a permanent multi-level energy dialogue platform gathering local authorities, civil society organisations, the business community, investors and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the different options envisaged for energy and climate policies", as requested in the Committee opinion.²¹ The EP rapporteur on Energy Union governance, Claude Turmes (LU/Greens/EFA), has repeatedly

²¹ ENVE-VI/018 - Energy Union governance and clean energy– rapporteur: Bruno Hranic (HR/EPP).

discussed these issues with the CoR rapporteur Bruno Hranic (HR/EPP) and ENVE commission members and has pledged to carry forward the key demands of the Committee in the inter-institutional negotiations.

Objective 2. The European Parliament report on **energy performance of buildings** has proposed as an amendment, a new point in the directive, in line with the Committee's position²²: "Mechanisms to finance energy-efficient new buildings, as well as energy efficiency measures in the building stock, should come from private, public-private and public sources. For private investments, the risk for investments in the modernisation of the building stock should be reduced. Public-private partnerships should especially be taken into consideration for energy efficiency measures in public buildings to decrease the financial burden on smaller and financially weaker cities, regions and Member States. Further, Member States should encourage energy efficiency measures, especially in social housing and housing for the weakest market participants, by public financial support for which Union funds could be used." The Committee has moreover conveyed its position to the EIB during a discussion which took place as part of the ENVE commission meeting in November 2017.

Objective 3. The ways to maximise synergies locally and regionally between sustainable energy and economic development and technology innovation were discussed thoroughly with the Estonian Council Presidency during the external ENVE conference on the Energy Union in Tallinn in July 2017. As a result, during the informal ministerial council of 20 September 2017 and the ministerial conference, which was dedicated to the development of smart energy systems, local and regional concerns occupy a prominent place in the final declaration, which has stressed **support for interoperable smart homes, cities and grids**. Moreover, in line with the Committee's position on the Winter package, the declaration underlined that digitalisation of the energy sector empowers consumers, facilitates the emergence of prosumers, demand-side response solutions and the uptake of break-through technologies, and benefits all market participants. It was agreed that the way forward for EU policy must be the development of new innovative solutions that make it possible to achieve maximum value from variable renewable energy sources, energy storage, demand-side response and smart energy efficiency tools.²³

Objective 4. The EC took on board, in the conclusions of the Energy Infrastructure Forum of 1-2 June 2017, the role of local and regional authorities, for example regarding an integrated approach to electricity and gas network management: "the Forum concludes that there are some areas of cross-over between the electricity and gas sectors such as the **growing need to engage with local and regional stakeholders** on the benefits of building new infrastructure and of adequately addressing their concerns." Moreover, the dissemination and discussion of the relevant Committee opinions with its participants has resulted in the acknowledgement of local and regional smart grid projects as projects of common interest under the CEF and a considerable increase of such projects in the latest round of calls compared to the previous rounds.

Given that the trilogue on the key legislative proposals of the 2016 Clean Energy for All Europeans package will take place in 2018, political work on the basis of these opinions will be continued together with the other EU institutions to increase the Committee's impact on the legislative process. A milestone for these inter-institutional activities is expected to be the meeting between the

²² ENVE-VI/019 - Opinion on Energy efficiency and buildings – rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE)).

²³ ENVE-VI/020 - Renewable energy and internal electricity market – rapporteur: Daiva Matoniene (LT/ECR)).

Committee President, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, and the European Commission's Vice-President, Maros Sefcovic in January 2018.

Climate change

Main impact:

- strengthened institutional role in the context of the global climate governance framework made it possible to pass on several political messages to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decision-makers;
- integration of the Committee's political recommendations in the Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders to Deliver the Paris Agreement At All Levels, which was referenced in the final UNFCCC COP23 press release as the major input from local and regional leaders;
- re-establishment of political links with representatives of US and Canadian associations of municipalities working on climate change.

In the area of **climate change** the ENVE commission structured its activities on climate change in 2017 around five main objectives:

- to pursue up-scaled ambition with higher targets for EU greenhouse gas emissions reduction in 2030 compared to 2005 levels;
- to turn global and European climate multi-level governance into practice;
- to accelerate climate action by cities and regions through better awareness on climate investment and financing opportunities;
- to enshrine a territorial approach and the role of regions in the next EU strategy on adaptation to climate change;
- placing the Committee as a stable actor on climate change issues both at European and international level, with particular regard to the relations with Northern American cities.

The five policy objectives were pursued as follows:

Objective 1. In its opinions adopted in 2017 the Committee made systematic reference to the **need to increase the current targets of the EU energy and climate policies**²⁴. This position was also consistently stressed during nearly all public events Committee members, including the President and the ENVE chair, attended as speakers. However, the relevant **EU objectives were not modified to meet the Committee requests**. The Committee engaged, therefore, in the **promotion of climate actions at local and regional level** that will contribute to the current EU objectives and potentially make it possible to exceed them.

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These CoR opinions are: ENVE-VI/017 - Legislative proposals for an Effort-Sharing Regulation and a LULUCF Regulation – rapporteur: Juri Gotmans (EE/PES); ENVE-VI/020 - Renewable energy and internal electricity market – rapporteur: Daiva Matoniene (LT/ECR); ENVE-VI/024 - Climate finance: an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement – rapporteur: Marco Dus (IT/PES).

Objective 2. Following the adoption of the **opinion²⁵ on Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22²⁶ in Marrakesh**, the Committee focused its efforts on two parallel and interconnected work streams: on the one hand, it aimed at raising its profile as **a valuable actor and stakeholder in the European and global climate governance systems**; on the other hand, by building on improved credibility through the first work stream, it aimed at **channelling its political messages** both independently and as part of larger international networks of regions and cities.

The Committee managed to strengthen its political role and raise its profile throughout 2017. On a proposal by **Climate Alliance** and the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – Local Governments for Sustainability, the CoR signed two separate **action plans** with these organisations in September 2017.

Thanks to its privileged relations with the ICLEI, the Committee was able to act as a more visible member of the ICLEI-led **Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency²⁷** at the UNFCCC COP23. Specifically, the Committee's technical services were part of the Advisory Group that organised the **Climate Summit of Local and Regional Leaders** and the political recommendations of our institution were largely integrated into the **Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders to Deliver the Paris Agreement At All Levels**. This declaration represented the outcome of the summit and was referenced in the **final UNFCCC COP23 press release** as the major input from local and regional leaders. For the first time, the Committee's comments were consistently taken into account when drafting the declaration. In addition, one of the outcomes of COP23 is that the **Talanoa Dialogue²⁸** is now extended to all levels of government in every city and region in the world.

The Committee has also been active in other global networks with the aim of conveying its political messages to key EU and global decision-makers. In doing so, it pursued a strategy of promoting its positions from as many angles as possible. This was the case for the **Climate Change Summit** and the International Climate Governance Coalition (ICGC). Its deliverables started to be circulated among a number of stakeholders (subnational authorities, NGOs, civil society organisations) in September 2017 and received positive feedback.

The CoR has been progressively acknowledged for its role in the context of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) and other fora. However, the objective of achieving a **formal recognition of the role of local and regional authorities in the context of the UNFCCC governance** structure has not yet been achieved. Such recognition should go beyond a mere formal consultation of non-party stakeholders as has been the case so far, and aims at more systematic involvement in the decision-making process not only through the mediation of national governments but through more formalised mechanisms. **Long-term cooperation** with international cities' and

²⁵ ENVE-VI/013 - Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22 in Marrakesh – rapporteur: Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES).

²⁶ UNFCCC COP22 - United Nations Climate Change Conference, Conference of the Parties.

²⁷ The LGMA gathers together networks of local and subnational governments that are accredited as observers at the UNFCCC.

²⁸ In accordance with decision 1/CP.21, paragraph 20, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to convene a facilitative dialogue (Talanoa Dialogue) among Partiesparties in 2018 to take stock of the collective efforts of Partiesparties in relation to progress towards the long-term goal referred to in Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Agreement and to inform the preparation of nationally determined contributions pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 8, of the Agreement.

regions' partner organisations is therefore essential to make the voice of regions and cities heard at international level as the process cannot be guided by the Committee alone.

Objective 3. The ENVE commission's work in 2017 mainly focused on **climate finance**. The main action was represented by the adoption of the **opinion²⁹ on Climate finance as an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement** at the October plenary session in the presence of Commissioner Arias Cañete. The political impact of the report will be assessed throughout 2018.

In April and September 2017, the ENVE secretariat organised **two conferences** dedicated to financing opportunities for mitigation and adaptation measures respectively. The conferences enabled the **establishment of contact** between Committee members and representatives of financing institutions (EC, EIB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, R20 (Regions of Climate Action), etc.) which could be further exploited by the former for the funding of climate-related projects in their areas. In 2017, the Committee members also benefitted from a **study on Financing climate action: opportunities and challenges for local and regional authorities**. In 2018, the ENVE secretariat will monitor whether and to what extent the study recommendations were taken into account.

This objective was mainly pursued through the adoption of an own-initiative **opinion on Towards a new EU climate change adaptation strategy – taking an integrated approach³⁰**. A final assessment of the extent of the Committee's impact on the EC's final proposal will be only possible when the new EU Adaptation Strategy is published in mid-2018. However, for the time being the positive attitude of the European Commission as regards the Committee's recommendations confirms that a strong opinion, underpinned by solid preparatory work, is essential to ensure the credibility of our proposals.

Objective 5. The United States' announced intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement opened up a number of political opportunities. While it confirmed the EU's ambition for a leadership position in the fight against the effects of climate change, it also gave regions and cities a stronger role in the future implementation of the agreement in those countries where national authorities are lacking ambition. The Committee opted for stepping into this political context to raise its profile as a reliable actor in climate change policy.

The Committee started to act as the link between the LGMA organisations and the EU delegation in the context of the UNFCCC COPs. The fact of having direct contacts with the EU delegation also helped the Committee achieve a higher status among other local and regional stakeholders (and their networks) working at global level. The Committee also started to be perceived by the EC as a potential contact point for local and regional matters during the COPs thanks to its ability to channel the EU position within the LGMA. The impact of such actions is summarised in the section dedicated to Objective 2.

Another strand of action was represented by the establishment of **political links with the political representatives of the US and Canadian associations of mayors**. In 2017, the Committee managed

²⁹ ENVE-VI/024 - Climate finance as an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement – rapporteur: Marco Dus (IT/PES).

³⁰ ENVE-VI/015 – Towards a new EU climate change adaptation strategy – taking an integrated approach - rapporteur: Sirpa Hertell (FI/EPP).

to revive the ties with the US Conference of Mayors after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2010.

This new political effort sought to establish a political dialogue between local and regional authorities which aims at creating direct communication between sub-national authorities from both sides of the Atlantic in order to exchange on tangible actions to reduce the common carbon footprint. Although the impact of this exercise can only be fully assessed in 2018, the actions undertaken in 2017 have political consequences. In particular, the transatlantic dialogue helps to structure cooperation around four concrete axes implemented through the Committee's partnership with ICLEI and the Global Covenant of Mayors:

- long-term cooperation in the framework of the Global Covenant of Mayors and the partnership with ICLEI referred to above;
- long-term cooperation in the framework of the International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme of the EC;
- political support brought to American and Canadian initiatives and organisations through the endorsement of the America's pledge³¹;
- re-ignition of the Memorandum of Understanding with the US Conference of Mayors.

The COP23 in Bonn provided the backdrop for a number of bilateral meetings with US and Canadian mayors and governors, the main purpose of which was to assess the appetite of our partners to go for this type of reinforced partnership. The Committee political representatives were able to convey the position of European cities and regions on climate challenges, to use the opportunity for further advocacy for the Global Covenant of Mayors, and to discuss the tangible actions such as reinforced EU-Canada/EU-US cooperation could consist of with the US and Canadian partners. The results of these bilateral meetings set the scene for 2018 activities, including an invitation addressed to the Committee to take part in the winter meeting of the US Conference of Mayors, participation of US/Canadian mayors in the Committee plenary sessions, and the organisation of a joint event at the next COP24.

Covenant of Mayors

Main impact:

- strengthened institutional alliances within the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (CoM) with the European Commission and European networks;
- establishment of the Committee's seat in the Global Covenant of Mayors Founders Council;
- co-launch of the Global Covenant of Mayors Day and organisation of the Committee's Transatlantic Dialogue on Climate Change at the COP23 in Bonn;
- the CoM's objectives promoted by the Committee ambassadors in their regions and cities, attracting new signatories and embedding the Covenant processes in a national context.

At European level, the Committee managed to secure a privileged dialogue with the European Commission both through its legislative work and its frontline role in the Covenant of Mayors for

³¹ America's Pledge [on climate change \(https://www.gov.ca.gov/2017/07/12/news19872/\)](https://www.gov.ca.gov/2017/07/12/news19872/).

Climate and Energy. Direct contacts are now in place at both political and technical levels allowing for proper communication of the Committee's messages to both the European Commission and the secretariats of the EU and Global CoMs. The Committee has occupied a permanent seat on the Global Covenant's Founders Council and is involved in the work of the EU Covenant of Mayors Board. Consequently, the Committee effectively managed to strengthen its political alliances with key European networks of LRAs making up the Covenant consortium. The most visible driver in this process is the Committee's own network of CoM ambassadors. In 2017, two major events were held which aimed at consolidating their role and scope of activity:

- i) the April ENVE conference on **Climate Finance** which sought to explore the ambassadors' role in engaging their respective national and/or regional governments in lobbying for support for Covenant activities;
- ii) the November coordination meeting, which sought to formulate and boost the role of Committee ambassadors in promoting the CoM, recruiting new signatories and embedding the Covenant processes in a national context. Special emphasis was put on the Committee's **Local event** initiative and the link to the **Reflecting on Europe** exercise.

The Committee also held a round-table within the 2017 Assises of Decentralised Cooperation entitled **The role of the Regional Covenants of Mayors in facilitating decentralised cooperation to promote sustainable energy access and climate action. Insights from EU Neighbourhood South and Sub-Saharan Africa**. The idea was to look at the Global Covenant of Mayors as the enabling framework for decentralised cooperation.

The 2017 EWRC workshop entitled **The Covenant of Mayors Community: Coordinated local action as a blueprint for national policy frameworks**, brought together stakeholders that committed within the CoM to promote their activities, explore synergies with other relevant initiatives, develop tools for the development and implementation of action plans, share knowledge on mitigation and adaptation and deploy financial resources. It offered the setting to present good practices, as well as to discuss common challenges and potential solutions for CoM municipalities. A particular emphasis was placed on involving national coordinators which are crucial in order to fully embed the Covenant processes and ensure synergies with policies and targets set at the national level.

During COP23 in Bonn, the Committee co-launched the Global Covenant of Mayors Day and organised its own Transatlantic Dialogue on Climate Change. The Committee consistently succeeds in raising its profile as the chief institutional supporter of the Covenant vis-a-vis the EC, the EP and the Covenant community at large.

2.2 The territorial dimension of EU legislation matters

Working in the interest of citizens, no matter where they choose to live and work.

2.2.1 Employment and social policy

Main impact:

- expansion of the legal bases of the Directive on the Posting of Workers by covering the social acquis;
- long-term posting was reduced from 24 to 12 months, in order to ensure reasonable balance between the free movement of services and the appropriate protection for posted workers;
- specific cross-border obstacles to labour mobility were addressed within the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Employment and social policy have been given priority treatment in the legislative process in order to address the social dimension of the European Union.

In March 2016, the legislative proposal on the **revision of the Posting of Workers Directive** was published. The CoR was the first EU institution to adopt, in December 2016, a position on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive. Since then, the Committee opinion has been promoted with the relevant institutions (at meetings with the co-rapporteurs and the shadow rapporteurs in the EP, with the Council secretariat and with the EC).

This institutional networking had fruitful outcomes with several Committee positions being taken on board both in the EP's draft report and in the Council's general approach:

- the EP's position, which largely followed the Commission's proposal, proposes expanding the legal basis for the Directive, to also cover the social acquis;
- the Committee had considered it "essential to strike a reasonable balance between the free movement of services, on the one hand, and protection for posted workers and against wage and social dumping, on the other"³²;
- the Committee had considered it "essential to strike a reasonable balance between the free movement of services, on the one hand, and protection for posted workers." The Council agreed to bring long-term posting down from 24 to 12 months, a position suggested by the Committee;
- position confirmed by the EP (vote at the plenary in June 2018).

The Committee has continued to monitor the inter-institutional negotiations in order to ensure that, where the two institutions took on board the Committee's suggestions, their position is maintained in the course of the trilogues, and to scrutinise the consistency with the "Europe on the Move: Labour

³² SEDEC-VI/011 - The Revision of the Posting of Workers Directive – rapporteur: Yoomi Renström (SE/PES).

aspects of road transport" package. Indeed, the Committee was particularly vigilant regarding the proposal on social security coordination³³ which must not affect the Posting of Workers Directive.

The EPSCO Council on 23 October 2017 agreed to change some of the wording of the joint declaration, clearly moving in the direction of the Committee opinion³⁴, namely:

- when talking about the EU taking into account the diversity of national systems and the key role of the social partners;
- when mentioning the different socio-economic environments and the diversity of national systems, including the role of social partners;
- when referring to the fact that the whole European social pillar has to respect the diversity and the organisation of public authorities in the Member States.

Over the past two years, the Committee has adopted two opinions in response to the EC's publications on the **European Pillar of Social Rights**³⁵ and in the perspective of the mobilisation towards the Gothenburg summit in November 2017, and also contributed to high-level events³⁶. In its opinion on the "Coordination of social security systems", the Committee, which stresses the importance of supporting mobility within cross-border regions, has convinced the EC to address the specific cross-border obstacles to labour mobility.³⁷

One year after the Gothenburg summit, the Committee will organise a high-level conference in order to assess, in November 2018, the latest developments regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights and the potential of local and regional authorities to reach the European social targets.

2.2.2 Digital Single Market

Main impact:

- setting up of a Broadband Platform;
- strengthened cooperation between the Committee and the Council Presidency via the Committee's eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board and its involvement in drafting the Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment.

In 2016 and 2017, the EC published most of the dossiers relating to the Digital Single Market (DSM). The DSM strategy, the second of the ten priorities of the Juncker Commission, aims to bring the single market to the digital world, opening up digital opportunities for people and business, breaking

33 COM (2016) 815 final.

34 Following the compromise agreed at Coreper on 20 October with a view to the EPSCO Council, some changes to the wording of the joint declaration went in the direction of the opinion. Namely: part of AM 2 was taken up in preamble 7; part of AM 7 went into preamble 17; part of Am 7 was included in preamble 19.

35 SEDEC-VI/010 - The European Pillar of Social Rights – rapporteur: Heinz-Joachim Höfer (DE/PES) and SEDEC-VI/027 - The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe – rapporteur: Mauro D'Attis (IT/EPP).

36 On 23 January 2017, the CoR vice-president represented the CoR at the high-level event on "The European Pillar of Social Rights: going forward together".

37 COTER-VI/036 - Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions,- rapporteur: János Ádám Karácsony (HU/EPP).

digital barriers and enhancing Europe's position as a world leader in the digital economy. The Committee strongly supports connectivity for all EU territories, thus reducing the digital divide. In this context, the Committee adopted several opinions on the matter.³⁸

The last opinion on the **Digital Single Market: mid-term review**³⁹ recommends laying the groundwork for all areas to be connected to broadband and ultra-broadband services, which will be efficient in the long term within a competitive environment, and calls on the Commission, as part of the implementation of the digital single market, to also report regularly on the progress made in bridging the digital divide, particularly at regional and local level.

It also stresses that the EC's new cybersecurity strategy should help improve the prevention, detection and response to cyber incidents and lead to better information sharing and coordination between Member States and the EC against major cyber incidents. Achieving this will require close cooperation in partnerships involving Member States, the EU institutions, LRAs, the private sector and civil society.

The direct impact of those efforts was the setting up of a **Broadband Platform**, which was mentioned in the EC Communication of September 2016 on "Connectivity for a Competitive Digital Single Market – Towards a European Gigabit Society". The first meeting took place on 12 October 2017 with the Committee President and Commissioner Mariya Gabriel as co-chairs.

The Broadband Platform will not become a new inter-institutional structure. Its aim is to provide a political forum in view of the deployment of faster, better and sustainable high-speed broadband in all European regions and in particular in rural and sparsely populated areas, thus working towards eliminating the digital divide due to geographical location and/or market failure. This platform could set the place for further discussions on digital developments that are interesting for local and regional authorities based on the provisions of the infrastructure. The platform's agenda is based on four main pillars to structure the subjects that are debated during the biannual meetings of BP participants: policy and governance, technology choices, financial opportunities and regulatory framework. This platform, which allowed for a structured dialogue between Commissioner Gabriel, DG CNECT and the Committee in this field enriched the Committee opinion on **Boosting broadband connectivity in Europe**⁴⁰ which took on board a number of key demands of both the Committee and DG CNECT, and will contribute to the preparation of the Committee position on broadband investment in view of the discussions on the next MFF.

Legitimated by its strong commitment to a digital single market, the Committee has been invited to take part in key high-level events such as the Broadband Days organised by DG CNECT, which gave the opportunity to reiterate the relevance of local and regional authorities as key players for the implementation of the Digital Single Market strategy.

38 SEDEC-VI/025 - "Building a European Data Economy"; SEDEC-VI/019 - "Copyright in the Digital Single Market"; SEDEC-VI/018 - "The review of the telecom package"; SEDEC-VI/003 - "Review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive"; SEDEC-VI/014 - "Digitising European Industry"; SEDEC-VI/009 - "Modernisation of the EU copyright rules"; SEDEC-VI/013 - "eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020"; SEDEC-VI/030 - "Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions"; and SEDEC-VI/031 - "Digital Single Market: Mid-term review".

39 SEDEC-VI/031 - "Digital Single Market: Mid-term review" – rapporteur: Alin-Adrian Nica (RO/EPP).

40 SEDEC-VI/034 - "Boosting broadband connectivity in Europe" – rapporteur: Mart Vörklaev Vorklaev (EE/ALDE).

In recognition of the important role of the local and regional authorities in eGovernment, the CoR took part in the Tallinn ministerial conference on eGovernment in Tallinn on 6 October 2017. The Committee was actively involved in providing input into the drafting of the Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment through the participation of rapporteurs Andreasson⁴¹ and Cecconi⁴² in the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board. As a result of this process, local and regional authorities are mentioned in the text where applicable and the merits of joint structures with local and regional authorities are clearly stated in the chapter on horizontal enabling policy steps⁴³.

The participation of the Committee in the eGovernment Action Plan Steering Board was also strengthened with its opinion on **Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions**⁴⁴ adopted at the Committee plenary session in November 2017 following a referral from the Estonian Presidency. As a key priority of its programme towards a digital Europe, the Estonian Presidency contributed to the Committee Bureau held in Tallinn on 1 September 2017 focused on public sector innovation supporting local and the regional authorities in the implementation of the eGovernment Action Plan. The Committee rapporteur was also invited as a speaker to the conference on "Innovation in Government: the new normal" organised by the Observatory of Public Sector Innovation of the OECD in October 2017 paving the way for more active cooperation with this observatory in the future.

On 6 June 2018, the EC presented its proposal for the next MFF and the Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027. The EC has created a new Digital Europe programme with an overall budget of EUR 9.2 billion to shape and support the digital transformation of Europe's societies and economies. The programme will boost frontline investments in supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and advanced digital skills. SEDEC is planning to adopt an opinion on this topic with an impact on the other European institutions.

The main elements of the proposal most relevant for local and regional authorities are:

- high-performance computers, or supercomputers, are needed to process ever-larger amounts of data;
- artificial intelligence is one of the most promising technologies for economic growth and addressing societal challenges in the years ahead;
- it is crucial to invest in cybersecurity, as trust and awareness are the foundation of a functioning Digital Single Market;
- gains from investments in digital technologies will only be reaped if there are enough digitally skilled people able to use them.

The Digital Europe programme will ensure the digitalisation of public administrations and public services and their EU-wide interoperability, and will facilitate access to technology and know-how for all businesses, notably SMEs.

41 SEDEC-VI/013 - "eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020" – rapporteur: Martin Andreasson (SE/EPP).

42 SEDEC-VI/030 – "Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions" – rapporteur: Frank Cecconi (FR/ALDE).

43 "commit to expand and deepen the exchange and sharing of good eGovernment practices and successful domestic solutions, to speed up the digital transformation at all levels of government – including by enhancing the joint governance structures with local and regional authorities;"".

44 SEDEC-VI/030 - Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions – rapporteur: Frank Cecconi (FR/ALDE)).

2.2.3 Blue Growth

Main impact:

- in 2017 the Committee participated, through its respective rapporteurs, in the steering committees of the Atlantic Strategy and the Initiative for Blue Growth in the Western Mediterranean: The direct input into the policies is based on the two respective Committee opinions⁴⁵⁴⁶;
- the conference on "Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Black Sea" led ultimately to the increase in fishing quotas for turbot for Bulgarian and Romanian fishermen;
- the "Proposal for a regulation [...] for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy – COM(2015) 294 final" was adopted with Committee Am 4 of the Regulation accepted in its entirety.

Blue growth as one of the NAT political priorities is focused on supporting the EU's coastal communities to create sustainable jobs and growth. The huge potential of the blue economy is still underestimated.

The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is one of the European Structural and Investments Funds for the 2014-2020 period. It has a budget of approximately EUR 6.5 billion. Together with EIB risk investment capital, targeted investments can support the social and economic developments of regions at the EU's maritime borders. To achieve its aims, the NAT commission used all available instruments: through its opinions, input into EU legislation, events, bilateral meetings and joint activities with other institutions, bodies and associations, exchanging best practices for projects and funding opportunities.

The basis of NAT's work in this field in 2017 was set through two influential Committee opinions setting out the positions of LRAs on the two main elements of the blue growth policy – economic growth and sustainability: A new stage in the European policy of blue growth⁴⁷ and International Ocean Governance – an agenda for the future of our oceans⁴⁸.

As a result, the Committee was invited to the informal ministerial meeting on blue growth taking place in Malta in April 2017, where the rapporteur defended the positions of the EU's coastal communities with all 28 Member States. The rapporteur also represented the Committee at the high-level event held subsequently by the Estonian Presidency, "Beyond 2020: Supporting Europe's Coastal Communities". The impact of the opinions was further strengthened through individual meetings of rapporteurs with members of the European Parliament, participation in meetings of the EP Seas,

45 NAT-VI-022 - Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic Area - Delivering Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth – rapporteur: Jerry Lundy (IE/ALDE).

46 NAT-VI/023 - Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean – rapporteur: Samuel Azzopardi (MT/EPP).

47 NAT-VI-019 - A new stage in the European policy of blue growth – rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau FR/PES.

48 NAT-VI-018 - International Ocean Governance - an agenda for the future of our oceans – rapporteur: Anthony Buchanan (UK/EA).

Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup and effective alliance-building with the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, which contributed actively to the work of the NAT commission on blue growth.

2017 was a very successful year for cooperation with the European Commission. Only a month after the world conference on "Our Ocean" in Malta, Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, welcomed representatives from European local and regional authorities for a follow-up event at subnational level at the Committee with the slogan "Ocean Meets Regions". During the forum, Commissioner Vella announced the creation of a new Blue-Green investment platform, requested in Committee reports, with the support of the EIB.

Another successful event was the Committee conference on "Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Black Sea" that took place in June 2017, calling for improvements in the situation of small coastal fisheries in the regions. The conference on "Sustainable Development of Fisheries in the Black Sea" initiated a discussion between fishermen, the Member States, the Commission and the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, leading to a bigger quota allocation of the most valuable commercial species, turbot, for Bulgarian and Romanian fisheries. After the conference, a Total Allowable Catch change from 86.4 tonnes to 115 tonnes in total for both countries was adopted by the GFCM and confirmed with Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2360 of 11 December 2017.

The highlight of the NAT commission's work in the field of maritime affairs and fisheries is expected to be the adoption of the opinion on "The EMFF beyond 2020 – Investing in Europe's Coastal Communities" prepared by rapporteur Alberto Nunez Feijoo (ES/EPP), President of the Region of Galicia, Spain. In addition, a high-level event on aquaculture will be jointly organised with the European Commission – "EU Aquaculture – Farmed in the EU Regions" – highlighting best practices and solutions for regions developing aquaculture. The main focus of the work in this policy area will remain the prosperity of the EU's coastal communities.

2.2.4 Rural policy

Main impact:

- the compromise on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the EU agreed at the trilogue on 12 October 2017 takes on board Committee proposals under the Common Market Organisation;
- the EC's Communication on the Future of Food and Farming⁴⁹ takes on board Committee proposals, such as strengthening the synergies between the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and cohesion policy, allowing for more flexibility for Member States to transfer from the first to the second pillar (i.e. from direct payments to support for rural policies), better supporting young farmers.

The overarching policy objective of the NAT work on rural policy is to overcome the deep territorial divide in the EU by offering prospects to all EU citizens living in regions that have been forgotten by mainstream EU politics. Rural policy is not just about agricultural policy, although this remains an important aspect. It is about connecting all EU citizens to the benefits of the single market, demonstrating that the EU understands and addresses imbalances in social and economic development

⁴⁹ COM (2017) 713 final.

in many EU regions. In order for this to happen, the EU needs to completely rethink its rural policy, moving away from traditional thinking and accepting the real problems that seem to be so far away from urban hubs where most policy-makers work. Rural territories are development and innovation hubs, but they need specific attention and strategies.

In addition, with regard to agriculture, the Committee wants to strengthen the role of farmers in the production process, which is why the impact mentioned above is of particular importance. Moreover, under the decision on the implementation of the budget in agriculture, producer organisations would be allowed to plan production and negotiate delivery contracts on behalf of their members – something already existing in sectors such as olive oil, beef and arable crops – with a view to improving the position of farmers in the food supply chain. The message in all opinions can be summarised broadly as: We need a fairer EU rural and agricultural policy⁵⁰; a policy that is not driven by big agricultural companies; a policy that is not aimed at benefitting a few competitive global players at the expense of the vast majority of European rural territories; and a policy that recognises the value of European traditions and areas, which cannot always be expressed in monetary terms.

Committee members participated actively in many conferences and platforms, in order to bring the Committee's messages to the right political addressees. Examples include: the debate on "The Cork 2.0 declaration – From Reflection to Action" during the Green Week in Berlin with Commissioner Hogan and MEP Herbert Dorfmann (IT/EPP), the February plenary session debate with Commissioner Hogan on the future of the CAP and in the July plenary session with MEP Czeslaw Siekierski, the Committee conference (March 2017) on the CAP and the EU's investment plan, with MEP Eric Andrieu (FR/SD), rapporteur for *How can the CAP improve job creation in rural areas?*⁵¹ and MEP Czeslaw Siekierski (PL/ EPP), chair of the EP Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, the joint conference with the EP intergroup on "Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas" and other organisations, on RURAL post-2020, with MEP Czeslaw Siekierski (EPP/PL), EP AGRI Chair, the joint workshop of the NAT section of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the NAT commission on "Rural-Urban dimensions: towards more territorial and social cohesion" (June 2017), the DG AGRI high-level conference on the Future of the CAP post 2020 (July 2017), and the EP hearing on "Young Farmers", organised by the AGRI Committee of the EP (November).

The political activities of the NAT commission in the field of rural policy went beyond mere participation in meetings. Strategic press releases and communication activities contribute to the overall thematic planning in these policy areas, e.g. for all relevant opinions and all relevant conferences. The chair of the EP AGRI Committee wrote an important article for a Committee brochure on the topic.

50 Cited opinions are: NAT-VI/006 - The simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – rapporteur: Anthony Gerard Buchanan (UK/EA) (October 2015); NAT-VI/013 - Regulating price volatility of agricultural products – rapporteur: Jacques Blanc (FR/EPP) (December 2016); NAT-VI/012 - Supporting young European farmers – rapporteur: Arnold Hatch (UK/ECR) (February 2017); NAT-VI/021 - Future of the CAP after 2020 – rapporteur: Guillaume Cros (FR/PES) (July 2017); NAT-VI/025 - Revitalisation of rural areas through Smart Villages – rapporteur: Enda Stenson (IE/EA) (December 2017).

51 European Parliament (2015/2226(INI)).

Events were jointly prepared with partners of the NAT commission in the EP and the EESC. Moreover, the NAT commission continued its strategic partnership with the EP AGRI Committee by preparing a second joint meeting for January 2018. Contact between rapporteurs of both committees is strong: The NAT rapporteur on the CAP participated in an EP hearing and several meetings with MEPs.

As regards cooperation with the EC, the Committee rapporteur for the opinion on the "Future of the CAP" was invited to present his opinion during the high-level conference on the future of the CAP, for the first time. The Committee is now regularly invited to attend DG AGRI expert groups.

The NAT will continue its joint activities with the EC, the EP and other partners in 2018. The joint meeting with the EP AGRI Committee, a workshop on "New international agricultural trade rules", the external seminar on Sustainable Food Systems, another joint meeting with the EP intergroup RUMRA (Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas Intergroup), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 11th Rural Policy Conference on Enhancing Rural Innovation and the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) seminar on smart villages are just a few elements of the strategy towards a fairer, more sustainable and more supportive policy for EU rural areas.

2.2.5 Health

Main impact:

- elaboration and presentation of the Committee study on the "Management of health systems in the EU Member States - the role of local and regional authorities" and the debate with **Commissioner Andriukaitis** on this topic led to more recognition of the local and regional responsibilities in health policies at EU level.

Throughout 2017, the Committee steadily strengthened its position as a strategic partner of both the World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe and DG SANTE. The Committee has been invited to speak at Heads of State and ministerial events of WHO Europe and the last 12 months were marked by a range of activities organised jointly. In parallel, the political commitment and energy of the Committee health rapporteurs brought the Committee to the frontline of policy debate around the future of health systems and digital health, resulting in invitations to informal council meetings, presidency events and European Commission expert forums.

Finally, well-established relations nurtured with relevant networks (e.g. Euregha, Healthy Cities, Regions for Health Network, Mental Health Europe, etc.) enable Committee members and staff to remain abreast of current practice on the ground and to share the policy messages and recommendations set out by the Committee.

2.2.6 Food policy

Main impact:

- the dossier on "The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues"⁵² was mentioned in the Council conclusions. The Council conclusions were adopted on 12 December and explicitly refer to the Committee opinion:

"... RECALLS the opinion issued by the Committee of the Regions on 9 February 2017 on 'The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues', which calls for a new EU alcohol strategy, endorsing the call from the Council and from the European Parliament for strong political leadership on the issue, and highlighting particular areas for action, such as reducing the exposure of children and young people to alcohol marketing and advertising, improving alcohol labelling at EU level and improving road safety."

The Committee opinion on "Food waste"⁵³ fed into the EP report on "Resource efficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety" (2016/2223(INI)). The final report takes some of these on board, notably on the key role of local and regional authorities in reducing food waste and in implementing food waste reduction and prevention programmes as well as on codes of good practice in business in the food, catering and hotel sectors with the aim of making optimal use of products.

In addition, the Committee rapporteur on "Food waste" also actively participates in the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, along with the EP rapporteur, Commissioner Andriukaitis, and officials from the EC and the Member States as well as other relevant stakeholders. In this context, an exhibition of best practices from EU regions and cities was organised, showcasing how members from across the EU prevent food waste in their constituency.

2.2.7 Tourism

Main impact:

- the Committee has inspired regions in Spain, Finland, Slovenia and Italy to launch the first ever partnership on tourism under the auspices of the Smart Specialisation Strategy. Sitting on its steering committee, the Committee will continue to work constructively with all regional authorities interested in modernising their tourism services and accessing innovative funding mechanisms.

Likewise, the Committee has also been the source of inspiration for other regions who are now exploring the idea of a European citizen traveller card – a new scheme to enable Europeans to benefit more from their citizenship when visiting another EU Member State.

⁵² NAT-VI-010 - The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues – rapporteur: Ewa-May Karlsson (SE/ALDE).

⁵³ NAT-VI-008 - Food waste – rapporteur: Ossi Martikainen (FI/ALDE).

Finally, the Committee has, as in previous years, been part of most relevant tourism events of the year. It further strengthened its ties with the EP Tourism Taskforce and EP Intergroup on Tourism and is poised to remain involved in the EU-China Year on Tourism, as well as the European Year of Cultural Heritage, working on board expert committees, speaking at high-level events and advising partners in the relevant departments of the EU institutions and in key networks.

2.2.8 Sustainable Development Goals

Main impact:

- the key role of local and regional authorities in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was recognised in the EP resolution on "EU action for sustainability", thanks to the Committee opinion and contacts between the Committee rapporteur and MEPs;
- the viewpoint of local and regional authorities was presented by the Committee rapporteur at the European Development Days as well as at the 2nd International Conference on National Urban Policy organised by the OECD and UN Habitat in Paris on 16 May 2017.

The Committee opinion on "Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability"⁵⁴, highlights that in order to achieve results it is essential to involve all levels of government in the decision-making process, particularly LRAs. LRAs – regions, provinces, counties, districts, metropolitan cities, small cities and municipalities – are fully-fledged policy-makers, tasked with identifying the most appropriate levels and methods of government for linking the overarching EU and UN objectives with those of local communities.

Referring to the first bullet point above, thanks to the Committee opinion on "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs) and the meeting between Committee rapporteur Franco Iacop (IT/PES) and EP rapporteur **MEP Seb Dance (UK/LP)**, the priorities of local and regional authorities have been taken on board and properly reflected in the EP document. The EP resolution of 6 July 2017 on "EU action for sustainability" (P8_TA(2017)0315) recognises in point G that many of the SDGs directly concern regional and local authorities and their implementation therefore requires a true multi-level governance approach. It stresses in point 5 that the principle of subsidiarity should be respected, calls for the establishment of clear and coherent sustainable development pathways at national and, if necessary, subnational or local levels, and states in point 10 that the CoR should act as a bridge between local and national actors.

Referring to the second bullet point above, the rapporteur Mr Iacop (IT/PES) was invited to speak at the 2017 European Development Days session "Towards a Territorial Approach to Economic Development" on 7 June 2017. He presented the Committee opinion on "European Action on Sustainability" outlining the role of LRAs as policy-makers and implementers of the SDGs. He also highlighted their crucial role in the relationship between public-private partnerships in order to generate investments that make the most of local resources. Mr Iacop mentioned the Committee and ARLEM Nicosia Initiative as a successful example of decentralised development cooperation for capacity building for LRAs in Libya.

⁵⁴ CIVEX-VI-020 - Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability" – rapporteur: Franco Iacop (IT/PES).

The rapporteur was also invited to speak at the 2nd International Conference on National Urban Policy organised by the OECD and UN Habitat in Paris on 16 May 2017. At the session dedicated to "Localising the SDGs in the framework of the New Urban Agenda: Data Needs and Policy Levers", he presented the main ideas in the Committee opinion.

Three Committee members participate in the work of the multi-stakeholder platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals set up by the European Commission: Arnoldas Abramavicius (LT/EPP), 1st Vice-President of the ECON commission as a full member; Peter Bossman (SI/PES) (CIVEX), and Roby Biwer (LU/PES) (ENVE) as observers. The platform is expected to become a vehicle for collectively implementing the SDG agenda across the EU spectrum and beyond. The first meeting of the platform was held on 10 January 2018.

2.2.9 Urban Agenda for the EU

Main impact:

- the Committee has become a key institution within the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU and has been proposed as a member of the Steering Committee by the Estonian Presidency, in order to participate in the Committee decision-making process of the Agenda.

2017 was a crucial year for the **implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU** and the Committee played a key role in enabling the successful launch of this new political process, further involving cities in the EU discussions and taking on board the first results of relevant Committee opinions, such as the opinion entitled "Towards an European Agenda on Housing"⁵⁵ which also called for a review of Decision 2012/21/EU with the aim of broadening access to social housing beyond "disadvantaged citizens or socially less advantaged groups".

As a direct consequence of the **Amsterdam Pact**⁵⁶, which granted the Committee the possibility to offer cities the chance to become members of the thematic urban partnerships, some cities that the Committee put forward, such as Gabrovo, Barcelona, Lille or the province of Navarra, were selected and the city of Sofia was even appointed co-coordinator of one of the urban partnerships on digital transition.

The COTER commission worked in close partnership with the REGI committee in order to reinforce the political added value of its contribution in this field, organising the second edition of a Joint EP-COTER public hearing on the Urban Agenda for the EU. Moreover, the Committee also organised four local events in cooperation with the European Investment Bank/JASPERS which aimed to clarify how to best implement the Urban Agenda for the EU in seeking resilient project solutions, as well as how JASPERS can best assist this.

Against this background, the COTER commission has become a key player within the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU and has been proposed as member of the Steering Committee by the Estonian Presidency, in order to participate in the Committee decision-making process of the Agenda,

⁵⁵ COTER-VI/025 - Towards a European Agenda for Housing - rapporteur: Hicham Imane (BE/PES)

⁵⁶ The Pact of Amsterdam established the Urban Agenda for the EU and it was agreed between EU ministers responsible for urban matters during their informal meeting in Amsterdam on 30 May 2016

facilitating the implementation process and the dialogue with the urban partnership coordinators, promoting the agenda on the ground, whilst representing European local and regional authorities.

2.2.10 Territorial and cross-border cooperation, EGTC and missing transport links

Main impact:

- following a Committee proposal, the EU EGTC Register was established and is managed by the Committee;
- EUR 150 million was added to the general CEF budget for projects on small cross-border projects;
- streamlined cooperation with EP TRAN Committee;
- growing understanding that people-to-people and small projects play an essential role in cross-border cooperation programmes.

In the Committee opinion on the **Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European grouping of cross-border cooperation (EGCC)**⁵⁷ the Committee asked for the EU EGTC Register to be based at the Committee, which was accepted and later adopted in the EGTC Regulation⁵⁸.

The objective of the Committee opinion on **Missing transport links in border regions**⁵⁹ was to address the development of local and regional rail and road transport infrastructure in border regions. The "missing links" problem was the main issue of discussion at the first **joint meeting of the EP TRAN- COTER commission** of 29 September 2016 and created the basis for further cooperation and another joint meeting on 27 September 2017. The rapporteur was a speaker at several workshops organised by the EP and the EC (10 October, 11 October and 18 October 2016). As the result of this political effort, the EC proposed an amendment to the CEF Transport Annual Work Programme 2016⁶⁰ which added EUR 150 million to the general CEF budget for small cross-border projects for rail infrastructure that resulted in 332 eligible proposals being submitted. On 28 September 2017, the Committee rapporteur was invited as a keynote speaker to the event "Missing Links-any progress?" held at the EP. DG MOVE stressed during this event that without the EP and the Committee the call would not have happened. A call for proposals on cross-border missing links is also planned for 2019.

The objective of the Committee opinion on **People-to-people projects in cross-border cooperation programmes**⁶¹ was to stress the importance of people-to-people and small projects for local and regional authorities and to provide evidence of their added value. The rapporteur managed to bring this particular issue to the political debate, highlighting the importance of such projects for the perception of the EU. On 2 November 2017 the rapporteur organised a **citizen's dialogue** in Liberec (Czech Republic) and on 21 November a workshop in Brussels with the participation of the Committee President. The rapporteur presented this opinion at the meeting of the EP REGI Committee on 25 January 2018 and at the high-level conference organised by the REGI chair on 27

⁵⁷ COTER-VI/026 - A new legal instrument for cross-border cooperation – rapporteur: Hans Niessl (AT/PES)

⁵⁸ Regulation (EC) 1082/2006

⁵⁹ COTER-VI/016 - Missing transport links in border regions – rapporteur: Michiel Scheffer (NL/ALDE)

⁶⁰ C(2016) 6380 final - https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/c2016_6380.pdf

⁶¹ COTER-VI/023 - People-to-people and small scale projects in cross-border cooperation programmes – rapporteur: Pavel Branda (CZ/ECR)

March 2018. There is a growing understanding that people-to-people and small projects play an essential role in cross-border cooperation programmes and their usefulness is no longer being questioned. The ultimate goal is to anchor those projects in the cohesion policy regulations in the next programming period.

The Committee opinion on **Simplification of ESIF**⁶² from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities calls for greater flexibility in the simplification process and for specialists to put forward concrete solutions for improving the practical implementation of ESIF:

- the Committee proposes that, for the purposes of simplification, the EC shall collect and monitor "bad practice" projects. This would serve to illustrate the need to simplify and adapt the approach and would complement the exchange of best practice regarding the implementation of ESIF. Given the practical experience of Committee members, the Committee should play a key role in the process;
- the basic documents for the individual funds in the 2014-2020 programming period were published by the Commission so late that it was impossible to begin implementation at the start of the programming period. There were long waiting times and difficulties in coordinating the individual OPs. In future, the documents should be published all together and in good time;
- the Committee reiterates that practical tools exist which could help ensure that the simplification of the management of ESIF is effective. The standardisation of procedures, the widespread use of IT tools and e-governance are among the basic elements that are widely applicable to these funds. In addition, progress should continue to be made, among other things, in the use of standard costs, which eliminate administrative burdens, and in the simplification of reports and monitoring, which may avoid additional bureaucratic burdens for beneficiaries and the various authorities involved in managing these resources;
- the Committee notes that pursuing the principle of partnership with local and regional authorities more readily in the design and throughout the implementation of ESIF would enable the European Commission to obtain feedback that would contribute in a decisive way to simplifying and increasing the effectiveness of the implementation process.

To reach this objective, the Committee organised a workshop on Simplification of European Territorial Cooperation and EGTC eligibility in EU funded programmes. The workshop was organised in cooperation with Interact, Europa Decentral and the EC and took place in Brussels on 22 November 2017. A detailed report with the recommendation was drafted and shared with all relevant stakeholders.

⁶² COTER-VI/012 - Simplification of ESIF – rapporteur: Petr Osvald (CZ/PES)

2.3 A simpler, more democratic Europe

2.4 *Reconnecting citizens and businesses at local and regional level*

2.4.1 Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA)

The main impact consists in the change of working methods via:

- more systematic implementation of TIA in the preparation of new EU legislation;
- creation of the TIA inter-service Working Group at the EC in which the Committee participates actively;
- development of training sessions on TIA methodologies for the EU institutions' staff.

In 2017, the key political objectives concerning TIA were:

- to raise awareness of the importance of territorial impact assessment as a tool in standard procedures of the impact assessments carried out by the EC;
- to develop TIA methodology;
- to carry out TIAs for the needs of the Committee rapporteurs; and
- to encourage DG REGIO to assume the role of the TIA coordination point for the EC.

The Committee's key objective to ensure that TIAs are carried out on relevant dossiers by the EC is starting to take shape as the EC's Regulatory Scrutiny Board⁶³ now requires that territorial aspects in impact assessments are assessed by the EC services for the relevant dossiers. In this respect, DG REGIO has assumed the function of the TIA contact point for the EC and has created the **TIA inter-service Working Group** in which the Committee actively participates. Moreover, DG REGIO had started to carry out a number of TIAs in 2017 with the strong participation of the Committee. As a result, in early 2018 we conducted two TIA exercises in close cooperation with DG REGIO. The first was designed to assess the effects of the EGTC Regulation – Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 amending Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006. In the second, the CoR was invited by DG REGIO to carry out a "quick scan" territorial impact assessment on European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), as part of cohesion policy.

In cooperation with ESPON, the Committee also carried out two TIAs in 2017, one on Smart Specialisation, and the other one on the Work Life Balance Directive.

In 2017, the JRC's work on the two methodologies developed for territorial impact assessments, Luisa and Rhomolo, was further developed within the framework of the JRC's activities in connection with the Knowledge Centre on Territorial Policies⁶⁴, which aims to provide regional analysis and data for impact assessments. At the same time, ESPON has further developed the TIA Quick Scan methodology which now also includes the Urban and Cross-border modules⁶⁵. To further develop TIA methodologies and to reflect on the existing ones, the Committee organised the annual TIA Methodologies Round Table on 20 June 2017 gathering all relevant stakeholders in this area. Moreover, in 2017 the Committee organised two training courses on TIA Quick Scan methodology that were aimed at increasing capacities in-house and among the staff of the EU Institutions. As a

⁶³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2016-rsb-report_en.pdf

⁶⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/territorial-policies/themes/territorial-impact-assessment>

⁶⁵ <https://www.espon.eu/tools-maps/espon-tia-tool>

result of the successful impact of this training, as of 2018, the EC has decided to launch its own **training sessions on TIA methodologies** intended for the staff of the EU institutions, which integrate multiple DGs, helping to raise awareness of the need to implement territorial impact assessments among relevant staff members, promoting the Committee's activities in the field and training more people who can implement TIAs in the future.

The overall impact of these activities is a **more systematic implementation of TIA** and a stronger co-ordination of TIA activities within the EC in the preparation of new EU legislation as was requested by the Committee in its opinion on assessing territorial impacts in 2013⁶⁶.

2.4.2 Subsidiarity and proportionality

Main impact:

- the major recognition of the Committee's work on subsidiarity and proportionality was evident from the invitation to participate in the Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality and "Doing Less More Efficiently", established by President Juncker with the goal of improving application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality;
- 8th Subsidiarity Conference held on 4 December 2017 in Vienna which focused on the discussion about converting the principle of subsidiarity into action;
- workshop on enhancing the subsidiarity mechanism and the role of regions in European affairs, held on 10 April 2018 in Brussels with the objective of promoting dialogue on the improvement and growth of the subsidiarity mechanism.

The Committee has historically made significant and consistent efforts in the field of subsidiarity. With a governance structure in place that includes the Subsidiarity Steering Group, the Subsidiarity Monitoring Network and the Subsidiarity Expert Group, the administrative support for subsidiarity from Directorate B and CIVEX and the online Subsidiarity Portal and REGPEX⁶⁷ platform, the Committee has taken up a role as a guardian of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. This central position brings with it a variety of responsibilities that include monitoring the work across all thematic commissions in this regard, keeping members informed, consulting subsidiarity experts and regional parliaments and contributing to the European Commission's annual subsidiarity report.

The most significant impact of the Committee in the field of subsidiarity and proportionality can be seen in the role that it has taken as part of the Task Force on Subsidiarity and Proportionality and "Doing Less More Efficiently". The Task Force was established on 14 November 2017 with the main purpose of proposing recommendations on how the EU could better apply the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality through a written report to President Juncker by 15 July 2018. This represents a pivotal moment for both the role of the Committee in the matters of subsidiarity and proportionality and the role of these principles within the EU itself. Together with the EC and national Parliaments, the Committee is directly shaping the future of Europe through the Task Force's work. The Committee's efforts have been invaluable in assisting the Task Force in accomplishing its goals:

⁶⁶ COTER-VI/038 - Assessing Territorial Impacts – rapporteur: Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)

⁶⁷ REGPEX is designed to support the participation of regions with legislative powers in the early phase of the EU legislative procedure, the Early Warning System. Furthermore, it is meant as a source of information and exchange between regional parliaments and governments in the preparation of their subsidiarity analyses. REGPEX provides an easy access to the relevant information sources of the EU institutions and national parliaments on EU legislative proposals.

from participation in meetings where the Committee delegation has adamantly held its position as a bastion of the local and regional level in matters of subsidiarity, to hosting the hearing to support the work of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing Less More Efficiently", held on 28 May in Brussels, a crucial event focused on expressing the views of different levels and types of stakeholders on the subject of subsidiarity in Europe. These efforts have already been acknowledged as the still unfinished final report includes and is highly influenced by proposals made by the Committee delegation. Throughout its engagement with the Task Force, the Committee has strongly advocated a common approach to subsidiarity assessment, a larger role for local and regional authorities in subsidiarity monitoring and emphasising the importance of European added value in the subsidiarity assessment.

Another milestone for the Committee's role in subsidiarity was the 8th Subsidiarity Conference that was held together with the Austrian Federal Council on 4 December 2017 in Vienna. Representatives of European Institutions, national and regional parliaments, the Court of Justice of the EU and the Committee discussed how to convert subsidiarity into action and stressed the role of the Committee in this process. Important issues discussed include the role of subsidiarity in bringing Europe closer to its people, raised by Committee President and Task Force member Karl-Heinz Lambertz, and the lack of recognition of the significance of regions as actors in the subsidiarity mechanism, raised by CIVEX Chair Barbara Duden (DE/PES).

As part of the conference on the future of the EU and the role of the regions, held on 10 April 2018 in Brussels, the Committee further highlighted the importance of these key principles to a variety of stakeholders. The workshop included discussion on a common approach to subsidiarity at all levels of governance, the importance of local and regional authorities in subsidiarity scrutiny and possible improvements to the current framework for subsidiarity monitoring within the EU. The workshop was moderated by Professor Gabriele Abels and welcomed Committee and Task Force member Michael Schneider (DE/EPP) and Professor Christian Callies as speakers.

CIVEX will continue to coordinate the feedback process from the various Committee services and external stakeholders and prepare content for the members' contribution to the Task Force aimed at promoting the role of the Committee and of local and regional authorities in the decision-making process.

2.4.3 Obstacles to investment

Main impact:

- overall recognition of the crucial role of investments in the transition to a circular economy – and in particular investments at the local and regional level;
- increased inter-institutional support for the Committee's positions in the field;
- streamlined Committee cooperation with EIB and OECD.

The Committee's key objective is to push up the EU agenda the importance of investments by LRAs and the issue of obstacles to long-term investments at local and regional level, highlighting the need for adequate funding of such investments. The Committee has placed a significant focus on this policy for some time, including through its work on the Investment Plan started in late 2014, and on the basis of its continuing collaboration with the EIB and the OECD.

The plenary session of February 2017 saw the adoption of the opinion on "**Bridging the Investment Gap**"⁶⁸ which was preceded by a constructive exchange with the EIB Vice-President Vazil Hudak on how the EIB supports EU regions and on its cooperation with the Committee.

Following up on this opinion, the President Markku Markkula took part in a high-level conference on the Circular Economy in March, where he stressed in a keynote speech attended by Commission Vice-President Jyrki Katainen, the crucial role of investments in the transition to a circular economy – and in particular investments at the local and regional level.

In Summer 2017, the Committee continued its cooperation with the OECD on investment (also in the context of the OECD's principles for "Effective Public Investment Across Levels of Government" and their review), by undertaking a new survey of LRAs⁶⁹, which provided some constructive insights to better understand the obstacles faced by LRAs.

With regard to the Investment Plan, the ECON commission followed up on its work of previous years: organising an event with DG ECFIN on the European Investment Project Portal (EIPP) as well as becoming an "EIPP partner", and commissioning a study on LRA involvement in the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) which, building on case studies, highlighted key challenges and opportunities.

The study was presented during a Committee conference on "**Making the Investment Plan Work for Cities and Regions**", in June 2017, which also featured the EIB's Deputy Managing Director of EFSI, Iliyana Tsanova, as well as closing remarks by MEP and Chair of the Long-term Investment Parliamentary intergroup, Dominique Riquet. All speakers stressed the need to further involve the LRAs in the EFSI, putting forward concrete examples and initiatives. The study was also discussed in a November 2017 meeting between Committee President Karl-Heinz Lambertz and member of the European Court of Auditors (ECA) Leo Brincat, in the context of the ECA's Performance Audit of the EFSI, where Mr Brincat warmly welcomed the Committee's input.

Building on the increasing inter-institutional support for the Committee's positions in this field, the Committee will continue its work on investment in 2018 and beyond, while further strengthening its cooperation with the EC, EIB, OECD and other key stakeholders in this policy area. For instance, as was envisaged in the Action Plan for cooperation between the Committee and EIB, a lunchtime briefing will be held on 9 July 2018 on the changes brought by the new "EFSI 2.0" regulation, with a particular focus on the elements of regional and local relevance.

⁶⁸ ECON-VI/014 - Bridging the Investment Gap – rapporteur: Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)

⁶⁹ CoR-OECD online survey on funding, management and regulatory challenges to infrastructure investment of EU cities and regions. Results available online: <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/pub/Documents/2017/2017-12-Survey-Results-Note.pdf>

2.5 Stability and cooperation within and outside the European Union

Supporting our neighbours on their path towards European values

2.5.1 Security

Main impact:

- increased and active cooperation with the EC, through the Committee's participation in the High-Level Commission Expert Group and sub-group on radicalisation and through high-level meetings;
- encouraging the Mediterranean regions to take action to prevent radicalisation;
- local authorities will have an active and crucial role in the protection of public spaces and preventing radicalisation.

Prevention of radicalisation and extremism is a top priority for the Committee as indicated in the resolution on its priorities until 2020. During 2017, the Committee paid special attention to cooperation with the EC, participating actively in the High-Level Expert Group on Radicalisation and its sub-group meetings, as well as in the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) working groups. The Committee is represented by Bart Somers (BE/ALDE) in the High-Level Commission Expert Group on radicalisation and by the head of the CIVEX Unit at administrative level, in the relevant sub-group (also with Member State representation, representatives from ministries). On 11 July 2017, CIVEX held an informal exchange of views with the European Commissioner for the Security Union, Julian King. Committee members had the opportunity to discuss matters related to the Security Union, share best practices and make suggestions on cross-border cooperation and the fight against cybercrime, as well as regional and local approaches for preventing and countering radicalisation.

A topic that generated a lot of interest during the July meeting was cybercrime and cybersecurity because staying secure online has become as important as staying safe offline. In this regards, a strategic debate focused on topics related to cybercrime and cybersecurity security was organised during the CIVEX meeting, held on 23 November 2017. In order to foster a convergence of views and inspire a culture of peace and reconciliation at a time where conflict and violence have caused a deep degradation of the environment in Libya, in cooperation with UNICEF, a training session for young Libyan opinion leaders was held on 19-23 April 2017, in Tunis.

180 young Libyans from across the country were trained in promoting positive peace and prevention of youth radicalisation.

Furthermore, one of the priorities of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) in 2017 was young people and anti-radicalisation. A report on "The role of the sub-national authorities from the Mediterranean region in addressing radicalisation and violent extremism of young people" was drafted by ARLEM member Mohamed Kamal El Daly, Governor of Giza (Egypt). The report was discussed by the ARLEM Commission during the meeting held on the 24 October 2017 and adopted during the 9th ARLEM plenary session, on 20–21 February 2018, in Giza. The report considered definitions of radicalisation and violent extremism, the root causes of radicalisation, and prevention and intervention programmes relating to violent radicalisation and de-radicalisation in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.⁷⁰

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<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9c800196-78c3-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

On 18 October 2017, the EC presented an action plan on the protection of public spaces as a direct follow-up to the terrorist attacks that have hit various cities across Europe in recent months. Local and regional authorities are playing a key role in this work. The Committee will be drawing up an opinion on the action plan. Jean-François Barnier (FR/ALDE), Mayor of Chambon-Feugerolles in France, has been appointed rapporteur. The opinion was adopted by unanimity by the CIVEX commission at its meeting held on 11 April 2018 and is scheduled to be adopted by the Committee plenary on 4-5 July 2018.

On 8 March 2018, the EC and the CoR held a conference of mayors from EU cities, who discussed the protection of public spaces and prevention of radicalisation. Lessons learned from recent attacks were presented and good practices emerging in cities across the Union were identified.

The Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner Julian King and Commissioner Corina Crețu invited regional and local authorities to jointly address terrorism and radicalisation and encouraged them to maximise the use of financial support offered by the EU.

Jean-François Barnier (FR/ALDE), rapporteur for the opinion "Action Plan to Support the Protection of Public spaces", and speaker on the panel "Security by design in public buildings, the urban landscape and public-private cooperation", highlighted the importance of the cooperation between the public and the private sector, as many public spaces (shopping malls, concert halls, sports areas, etc.) are managed and owned by private operators.

The panel discussion "Cities against radicalisation" was moderated by Bart Somers (BE/ALDE), rapporteur for the opinion "Combating Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: Prevention mechanisms at local and regional level", who emphasised the need for continued prevention efforts ("Build rather bridges than walls").

Finally, an external meeting and conference on "Regions and cities delivering on the European Agenda on Security: our global challenge, our territorial response", will take place in the second half of 2018 in Maroussi, Greece.

2.5.2 Migration

Main impact:

- recognition of the key role of local and regional authorities in integration of migrants in European Agenda on migration;
- strengthen cooperation: the Committee has developed very close cooperation with DG Home and with the International Organisation for Migration on the issue of the integration of migrants;
- bringing migrants and refugees to participate in debates.

The Committee has carried out extensive consultative activities on the topic of migration, especially since 2015 when the migration crisis broke out. Nine opinions were adopted during this period on different aspects of the topic. The latest opinion on the Mid-term review of the European Agenda on Migration⁷¹ was adopted on 22 March 2018.

⁷¹ CIVEX-VI/029 - Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration – rapporteur: Dimitris Kalogeropoulos (EL/EPP)

The opinion⁷² on the integration of third-country nationals has contributed to the recognition of the key role the local and regional authorities play in the integration of migrants. The EC recognises this crucial role in the communication on the delivery of the European Agenda on Migration (COM/2017/0558 final, September 2017). The work carried out by local authorities is also acknowledged in the OECD study on Integration of migrants and refugees at the local level (April 2018), based on a survey of 72 cities.

On 22 November 2017, the Committee received a letter from Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos in which the need for close cooperation between the Committee and the European Commission was reiterated. The Committee has developed strong cooperation with DG HOME to support initiatives of common interest such as Employers together for integration, the Urban Agenda Partnership on inclusion of migrants and refugees, the European Integration Network and the European Migration Forum.

Cooperation with the UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has also been established. Laura Thompson, IOM Deputy Director-General, participated in the Committee plenary debate on integration of migrants in March 2018. Furthermore, CIVEX is currently assessing with IOM the possibility of adapting the IOM capacity-building program to support the integration of refugees and migrants with a view to catering for the needs of the Committee members.

At the invitation of the Committee, Anila Noor, a refugee from Pakistan, and representative of the European Migrant Advisory Board, participated in the Committee's March 2018 plenary debate on migrant integration and social cohesion. This was the first public participation of a representative of this body set up within the framework of the Urban Agenda Partnership on inclusion of migrants and refugees. Bringing migrant and refugees' voices into the public debate can have a crucial impact in making migration policies better for them but also for host communities.

2.5.3 External relations

Main impact:

In the field of external relations, the areas in which the most tangible impact was achieved were as follows:

- Consolidating the role of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP);
- Developing peer-to-peer capacity-building in support of Ukrainian LRAs;
- Support provided to Libyan mayors (Nicosia initiative): 14 exchanges and training courses were organised in 2016-2017 for the benefit of more than 140 Libyan participants. 2017 saw significant follow-up activities, with the results of previous exchanges becoming evident.

Boosting the political profile of CORLEAP and achieving recognition for the role of LRAs across the priority areas of the Eastern Partnership is an ongoing effort. A good understanding of the

⁷² CIVEX-VI/015 - Integration of third country nationals – rapporteur: Karl Vanlouwe (BE/EA)

contribution and role of local and regional authorities in strengthening resilience, delivering prosperity, and other EaP policy objectives, is essential for **building a business case** for further pursuing decentralisation reforms. It is also a prerequisite for **effective communication** in support of the **sustained empowerment** of LRAs and their associations, as well as **targeted resource allocation**.

Participants at the **5th Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit** in Brussels in November 2017 acknowledged CORELEAP as a stage for the role of local and regional authorities to advance the objectives of the EaP at the level of governance closest to citizens. The importance of good governance at all levels was also highlighted. The **Committee resolution** on recommendations to the summit and the two **thematic reports** adopted by CORLEAP were distributed ahead of the summit to the participants.

Safeguarding the references to local governance and CORLEAP at summit level was possible through **sustained efforts over the past two years** and a strategic approach, which included:

- making the most of the strategic framework;
- developing added value and good communication;
- fostering contacts with institutional partners;

which also lead to:

CORLEAP and regional authorities being explicitly mentioned in reference documents, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) implementation report, the joint staff working document on EaP deliverables for 2020 and the communication on resilience in EU external action; a joint letter addressed by High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn to the participants at the EaP Ministerial meeting on 19 June 2017, in the run-up to the Summit, referring to the exchange with LRAs, inter alia through CORLEAP, as central in the context of a more efficient and effective EaP multilateral structure;

and a letter from Commissioner Johannes Hahn to the Committee President stressing the role of regional and local authorities in cooperating on and promoting the Eastern Partnership beyond the capitals, offering increased exchanges with a particular emphasis on the "20 Deliverables for 2020".

The **20 Deliverables for 2020** are conceived as a working plan for the years to come, to be regularly reviewed against progress achieved. A streamlined architecture for multilateral cooperation within the Eastern Partnership will closely monitor the implementation of tangible progress on the deliverables in a results-oriented and systematic manner, ensuring common ownership and joint commitment. According to their 2018-2019 work programmes, the multilateral EaP platforms will strive to ensure **ownership, engagement and exchanges** with local and regional authorities through CORLEAP. The Committee's contribution will be set out in an **own-initiative opinion**, to be complemented by the **2018–2019 CORLEAP Action Plan**, outlining activities in the run-up to the 6th EaP Summit in 2019.

The work of the **CoR - Ukraine Task Force** contributed to enhancing links between Ukraine and the Committee and its members. It has evolved over the year from offering general policy advice towards

more specific projects, focused on developing capacity-building in support of public administration reform:

- at the third meeting of the Task Force (30 June 2017, in Khyriv (Lviv region, Ukraine)), the members agreed upon concrete possibilities of peer-to-peer cooperation;
- in cooperation with the EC's "U-LEAD with Europe" programme, the Committee conducted a match-making exercise, on the basis of which the first five EU-Ukrainian local partnerships were identified;
- the launch event of the peer-to-peer initiative (March 2018, Brussels) brought together the selected 10 peers for the first time. With the assistance of the U-LEAD implementers (German Development Agency - GIZ), the pairs drew up action plans for the year and identified specific areas of cooperation: local economic development, tourism, energy efficiency, rural development and citizens' involvement.
- at the next meeting of the Task Force, which will take place in Kyiv on 25 September 2018, the stakeholders will discuss mid-term progress achieved in peer-to-peer cooperation.

Within the southern ENP dimension, the **Nicosia initiative to support Libyan municipalities** is aiming to contribute its modest share to stabilising the country and improving the living conditions of its population through capacity-building and establishing partnerships through city-to-city diplomacy. 2017 and 2016 were very successful years: 14 exchanges and training courses were organised for the benefit of more than 140 participants from the focal partner municipalities of the CoR in all parts of Libya on issues ranging from water and waste management to positive peace/anti-radicalisation to transparency at municipal level, to name just a few. This was made possible through both the commitment of European cities, regions and associations and the support of the EU Delegation to Libya.

The Committee delivers here a specific model of decentralised cooperation for development which was praised by High Representative Federica Mogherini as "city diplomacy at its best", in line with the European Council conclusions of 19 October 2017 in which it "underscores the urgency of supporting the development of the local communities in Libya".

The success stories of 2017 include a four-week follow-up training course in Murcia on water, Flanders investing EUR 100 000 to support a project on transparency at municipal level, the European Endowment for Democracy supporting the re-opening of the Sirte radio station which had been destroyed as follow-up to a youth project, and the decision by the Italian government to fund a project on fisheries by the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region over 18 months with EUR 500 000. The Committee was invited to present this initiative to German regional development ministries. The Nicosia initiative is expected to further increase the Committee's visibility and outreach, building credibility for its role as an effective platform of city diplomacy.

2.5.4 Environmental policy and circular economy

Main impact:

- the opinion on the Fitness Check on the Nature directives enabled the Committee to be fully involved in the preparation and implementation of the Action Plan for nature, people and the economy aimed at improving the implementation of the directives;
- the opinion on the Circular Economy Action Plan included elements that are now being developed in the new initiative for Delivering on the Circular Economy Action Plan.
- the institutions have reached an agreement on the Waste package. The text below analyses the outcomes of the main elements connected with the Committee opinion on the package;
- the Committee approved opinions on the Environmental Implementation Review (EIR) and on improving Environmental Reporting and Compliance. Now the Committee is involved in activities to improve implementation and compliance;
- opinions on air quality are being followed up with involvement of the Committee in high-level meetings (Clean Air Forum, Informal meeting of EU Ministers for the Environment in Sofia). The Committee adopted the opinions on Effective Water Management System and on the Drinking Water Directive, contributing to the revision of the EU legislation on water envisaged in the EU action plan on circular economy;
- cooperation with DG ENV has enabled the Committee to be involved in Green Week 2018, with the theme "Green Cities for a Greener Future" being of great importance for the Committee.

The following points describe areas of activities with examples of monitoring and implementation of EU legislation and recognition of the role of the Committee by the EC.

In general, the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment has proven to be a valid tool, as exemplified by the references in all the following points. The EC involved the ENVE secretariat in shaping the future objectives and aims of the platform, and stronger cooperation is planned in preparation for the platform's upcoming meetings.

Action Plan for nature, people and the economy and connected dossiers

A key policy objective for the environment sector is the preparation and implementation of the Action Plan. Its approval is in itself consistent with the conclusions of the Committee opinion⁷³ that the nature directives are fit for purpose but more efforts are needed to improve implementation. The Committee has been closely involved in the preparation of the plan, with President Karl-Heinz Lambertz participating in the meeting of the Project Team of Commissioners on the Follow-up to the Fitness check. The plan was launched at an event in June at the Committee opened by President Karl-Heinz Lambertz.

⁷³ ENVE-VI/005 - Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives– rapporteur: Roby Biber (LU/PES)

The Committee has been identified as being jointly responsible for 4 of the 15 actions under the plan and has a potential role in others as specified in the detailed factsheets. Cooperation on the implementation has already started in relation to multiple aspects:

- President Karl-Heinz Lambertz participated in the launch event of the Natura 2000 Day;
- ENVE has been consulted on the updated guidance document on Art.6 of the Habitats Directive and rapporteur Roby Biwer (LU/PES)⁷⁴ has provided comments setting the basis for further cooperation;
- ENVE is cooperating on disseminating information for the Natura 2000 Award and provided a jury member also for the 2018 edition, rapporteur Roby Biwer;

- In the framework of the EWRC, the Committee hosted an event organised in the framework of the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment on cross-border nature protection;
- From the inter-institutional point of view, the Council, the EP and the EESC have all taken a position on the Action Plan expressing general support and recognising the significant role of the Committee;
- In general, the Commissioner and DG ENV are cooperating with the Committee and supporting its involvement;
- The chair of ENVE, Cor Lamers (NL/EPP), also attended as speaker the Flagship conference of the Estonian Presidency on Nature-Based Solutions. This dossier is included in one of the actions of the plan and possible further cooperation with SEDEC in the framework of the Knowledge Exchange Platform is being discussed;
- The Action Plan is also connected with the opinion on the LIFE programme including measures to improve funding, in accordance with the Committee opinion on the subject.

Circular Economy and connected dossiers

A key objective is the circular economy. The recent efforts of the Committee in this field are based mainly on two opinions: on the Circular Economy Action Plan⁷⁵ and on the legislative proposals amending the Waste directives⁷⁶. In its 2018 work programme, the EC has included an initiative for "Delivering on the Circular Economy Action Plan":

- This initiative included the new Plastics Strategy, a communication published in January. The Committee opinion welcomed the Commission's focus on plastics. In particular, the opinion criticised the fact that littering and plastics leaching had not been addressed in more detail in the Action Plan. The strategy deals with both these issues and includes a legislative proposal (published on 28-05-2018) on "Single-use plastics: New EU rules to reduce marine litter". The Committee is currently working on an opinion on the Plastics Strategy (rapporteur: André Van de Nadort (NL/PES)).

⁷⁴ ENVE-VI/005 - Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives – rapporteur: Roby Biwer (LU/PES)

⁷⁵ ENVE-VI/011 - Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy– rapporteur: Babette Winter (DE/PES)

⁷⁶ ENVE-VI/010 - Legislative proposals amending waste directives – rapporteur: Domenico Gambacorta (IT/EPP)

- The initiative also included a communication on "Options to address the interface between chemical, product and waste legislation". The Committee opinion had welcomed the Commission's aim to outline the points of intersection between chemical, product and waste legislation. The communication states that this is a policy field where specific – often regional or even local – circumstances play an important role. The Committee is explicitly invited to take part into the discussion.
- The initiative includes a communication on "A monitoring framework for the circular economy". The Committee opinion included elements on monitoring with a specific reference to public procurement. The monitoring framework should include at a later date data on public procurement too.
- The initiative announced the revision of water legislation, including drinking water, minimum requirements for water reuse and urban waste water.

Please see below a non-exhaustive list of the main elements of the package in connection with the Committee opinion:

- concerning the general target for preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste, the Committee opinion called for a more ambitious 2030 target. The Parliament agreed with this position. The final agreement lowered both the 2025 and 2030 targets below the original proposal;
- concerning targets on packaging, the Committee opinion included an amendment asking for a target on plastics packaging in the next few years while not modifying the other proposed targets. The final text included a target for 2030 but at the level originally proposed for 2025. The other targets were mostly lowered below the original proposal;
- concerning food waste reduction, the Committee had proposed the inclusion of targets for 2025 and 2030. The Parliament had included a very similar proposal. The final text includes a proposal to decide on this aspect by 2023 on the basis of data collected;
- the final text includes a provision similar to the proposal of the Committee for developing standards for compost and digestate produced from bio-waste;
- the final text includes landfilling reduction and an objective of rejection of recyclable waste in landfilling. Both elements were present in the Committee opinion;
- elements proposed by the Committee opinion on Extended Producer Responsibility, for example on re-use centres and take-back systems, are present in the final texts.

ENVE has played an active role in multiple events in 2017 and 2018, in cooperation with other EU Institutions and bodies and multiple stakeholders. In November it hosted a conference on "Municipal and Regional Waste Management & Prevention" organised in the framework of the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment during the European Week of Waste Reduction (with which other forms of cooperation are ongoing).

On the subject of water, the Committee has stepped up its work in 2018 and achieved a greater impact:

- the Committee adopted its opinion on the revision of the Drinking Water Directive in May 2018, five months after the publication of the legislative proposal, closely related to the European Citizens' Initiative "Right2Water". This opinion was drafted by Marc Weinmeister (EPP/DE) who worked in close cooperation with the European Parliament: the Committee rapporteur spoke at the EP Intergroup on Sustainable Development and the EP rapporteur,

Michel Dantin (EPP/FR), spoke at the Committee plenary. The EP ENVI Committee will vote on the draft report in September;

- in May 2018, the Committee hosted the ERRIN seminar on innovation technologies applied to water management, related to Mr Loggen's opinion (2017);
- in 2018, the Committee will host the EC stakeholders' forum on the evaluation of the Urban Waste Water Directive, with a high level of participation by local and regional authorities and attendance by Committee members.

Environmental implementation and monitoring

This objective is based on the approval of opinions on Environmental Implementation Review (EIR)⁷⁷ and on improving Environmental Reporting and Compliance⁷⁸.

The opinion on the EIR was approved in October 2017. There has been significant inter-institutional activity on this dossier.

A major commitment of the EC is organising multiple activities with synergies with the Committee, especially the TAIEX EIR Peer-to-Peer⁷⁹, the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment and the Expert Group Greening the Semester/EIR (rapporteur Andrew Varah Cooper (UK/EA) attended the last meeting).

More generally, in 2017 the EC published the first edition of the EIR, including a package of country reports, a communication summarising the main findings and suggestions for improvements.

As stated in a communication in 2016, in the framework of the cyclic EIR work, the EC also liaises with the Committee in respect of the key horizontal findings in order to engage with local and regional representatives with a view to raising awareness about specific actions (for example through the Technical Platform for Cooperation on the Environment). A briefing on the first cycle was produced by the European Parliament Research Service at the request of a Committee member in the framework of the Cooperation Agreement between the Parliament and the Committee. Moreover, the Committee has produced a study on this dossier (with an online survey). Concerning compliance, a communication is expected soon and the EC's 2018 work programme includes an initiative to streamline requirements as a follow-up to a Fitness Check on Environmental Monitoring and Reporting. These documents will make it possible to better assess the impact of the Committee's work.

On 9 June 2017, the EC adopted the report "Actions to Streamline Environmental Reporting" (COM(2017) 312 final), accompanied by a EC Staff Working Document entitled "Fitness check of Reporting and Monitoring of EU Environment Policy accompanying the document" (SWD(2017) 230 final). The report takes into consideration several of the recommendations in the Committee's outlook

⁷⁷ ENVE-VI/021 - Environmental Implementation Review– rapporteur: Andrew Varah Cooper (UK/EA)

⁷⁸ ENVE-VI/008 - EU environment law: improving reporting and compliance– rapporteur: Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE)

⁷⁹ The TAIEX-EIR PEER 2 PEER programme provides tailored support to Member States' authorities implementing environmental policy and legislation.

opinions. The Staff Working Document refers to the Committee's contribution to the fitness-check through its outlook opinion. A communication on alignment of reporting is planned in June 2018.

On 22 January 2018, rapporteur Andrew Varah Cooper (UK/EA) participated in an event on Peer Learning for Environmental Implementation at DG Environment. For this event, he was specifically asked by the organisers to present the conclusions of the study drafted to support the preparation of his opinion.

The ENVE secretariat was invited to the stakeholders' compliance forum of DG Environment and also participated in the activities of the European Network of Environmental and Managing Authorities. The Committee will host the extraordinary Assembly of the EU Network for Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law – IMPEL on 14 and 15 June 2018

Air quality

ENVE organised an event in the framework of the Technical Platform for cooperation on the Environment during the EWRC in 2017. Moreover, the rapporteur and current chair, Cor Lamers⁸⁰, also attended as speaker the Clean Air Forum in Paris where he held a bilateral meeting with WHO. On 10-11 April 2018, the ENVE chair participated in the Informal meeting of EU Ministers for the Environment in Sofia, Bulgaria. Thanks to the invitation received by the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council, Cor Lamers briefed ministers and the Council Presidency on the Committee opinion on air quality. Further activities are planned for the ongoing evaluation of the Ambient Air Quality directives.

Green Week

The involvement of the Committee in Green Week was discussed at the bilateral meeting between President Karl-Heinz Lambertz and Commissioner Karmenu Vella of 21-12-2017.

The theme of the 2018 Green Week was "Green Cities for a Greener Future", which is of great importance to the Committee of the Regions.

- Commissioner Karmenu Vella and his cabinet involved the ENVE commission in helping to organise Green Week;
- The Committee hosted the European Week for Waste Reduction Awards as a Green Week pre-conference event with the participation of Michel Lebrun (BE/EPP) as jury member;
- Members of the Committee were included in the programme of the "Green Week High level EU Green Cities Summit" with a view to representing the point of view of local and regional authorities. President Karl-Heinz Lambertz was invited as speaker to the closing session. Michel Lebrun (BE/EPP) participated as speaker in the event "Cities needs in transition to a Circular Economy", organised by the Partnership on Circular Economy of the EU Urban Agenda.

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ENVE-V-046 - The Clean Air Policy Package for Europe – rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP), ENVE-V-017 - Review of EU Air Quality a Emissions Policy– rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP), DEVE-IV-026 - Industrial Emissions – rapporteur Cor Lamers (NL/EPP).

2.5.5 Space policy

Main impact:

- the Committee's position in favour of the EU continuing to ensure adequate funding for space research and innovation has been relayed to the Council;
- support for space innovation in the context of local and regional development was discussed at a joint round table organised with the European Space Agency;
- local and regional issues were acknowledged and the requirement to support local and regional SMEs on a broader scale was integrated into the EP resolution on a Space Strategy for Europe.

In the area of space policy, the Committee is concerned primarily with regional clusters developing within the framework of smart specialisation and with the promotion of **market uptake of downstream services and applications**. In order to develop this agenda, the Committee has sought to be involved in the Copernicus user forum, which was given the green light by the European Commission on 29 November 2017. This was supported by the EP.

In the response to the Committee opinion⁸¹ by the EC's DG for Growth (letter of 20 November 2017), Lowrie Evans stated that, in line with the Committee opinion, more actions would be needed for Europe to reach the ambitions set in the strategy, and the European regions will have a key role to play in this regard, notably when it comes to making a smart link between the European institutions and the local communities and **relaying European policies to SMEs, citizens and young generations**.

In order to discuss the evolving political context and strategy necessary for future action to bolster **involvement of local and regional authorities** in these activities, the rapporteur, Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE), met with the Commissioner, Elzbieta Bienkowska, on 6 December 2017, working towards a shared vision for raising awareness and promoting small and medium size enterprises at the local and regional level in the area of space economy. Moreover, it was felt during the meeting that the **amounts available for basic space research should be increased** because of international competition and the strategic need for technology independence (currently, space research has only EUR 1.7 billion out of EUR 80 billion, which is not enough, even if deadlines for project proposals sometimes need to be prolonged). The general increase, if achieved, could also benefit local and regional development.

The Committee has been developing close relations with the national level of governance in the EU space policy, both via the Estonian Council Presidency and by cooperating with the European Space Agency. With the European Space Agency, a joint round table was organised during the ENVE meeting on 8 February 2018 to discuss **space innovation support in the context of local and regional development**. Regarding the Council, the ENVE chair, Cor Lamers, sent a letter to the Estonian Minister, Urve Palo, ahead of the 1 December 2017 Competitiveness Council meeting on

⁸¹ ENVE-VI/022 - Space Strategy for Europe - rapporteur Andres Jaadla (ET/ALDE), adopted by the CoR Plenary Session on 12 October 2017.

space policy, to express the Committee's position in favour of the EU continuing to ensure adequate funding for space research and innovation, including programmes such as Copernicus.

Given that the next two years will be crucial years for the European Union's activities in space with the preparation of the next multi-annual financial framework, the Committee has developed close contacts with those members of the EP who are active in relation to the space policy and economy, notably the EP rapporteurs Constanze Krehl (DE/S&D) and Monika Hohlmeier (DE/EPP). **Local and regional SMEs should be supported on a broader scale** than now to be able to propose services and applications on the basis of Earth observation data within the framework of Copernicus. A number of the Committee's proposals were taken on board in final report by the EP, stressing specifically local and regional issues. Notably, in its resolution of 12 September 2017, the EP highlighted "the fact that the regional dimension is essential in bringing the benefits of space to citizens, and that the involvement of local and regional authorities can create synergies with smart specialisation strategies and the EU Urban Agenda", supported "an increased involvement of regional and local authorities in a successful EU space policy" and underlined "the fact that the CoR should be a member of the Copernicus user forum in order to highlight the importance of regional and local actors as users of Copernicus data".

2.5.6 Trade and globalisation

Main impact:

- the Committee will be appointed as observers to the expert group on EU trade agreements;
- the EP resolution called for local and regional authorities to be consulted in trade negotiations and for the introduction of mitigation measures in regions that lose out as a result of increased trade;
- the Commission asked regions to communicate to the Commission any concern or evidence they may have with regard to the impact of trade agreements.

The Committee has long- been involved in the **debate on EU trade** and investment agreements including through work on the TTIP and TiSA agreements⁸² and on the Union's Trade for All Strategy⁸³ in 2014-2016. Trade and investment agreements should consider specific local and regional circumstances and possible adverse impacts. The Committee therefore called for increased transparency in trade negotiations, and consultation of local and regional authorities. It also called for a systematic undertaking of territorial impact assessments. Furthermore, the Committee stressed that trade and investment are not only about increasing competitiveness and growth but also about developing all regions and strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) should be better coordinated with EU policies, notably cohesion policy, to reduce regional disparities within the EU and not further increase them.

82 ECOS-V-063 - The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) - rapporteur: Markus Töns (DE/PES), adopted on 12 February 2015 and ECON-VI/003 - The local and regional dimension of the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) - rapporteur: Helmut Markov (DE/PES) adopted on 4 December 2015.

83 ECON-VI/009 - A more responsible trade and investment policy- rapporteur Cllr. Neale Richmond (IE/EPP), adopted on 8 April 2016.

The Committee achieved increased transparency and a better understanding of the intricacies of trade negotiations by having access to the Commission reading room ahead of new negotiation rounds of TTIP. Furthermore, after the request⁸⁴ that the Committee should be represented in the expert group on EU trade agreements⁸⁵ the Commissioner for trade, Cecilia Malmström, announced that the Committee would be appointed as observers to the expert group on 24 April 2018. As a result of the Committee's strong political engagement with the European Parliament including the participation of the Committee rapporteur in the EP INTA debate on the EU's New Trade Strategy⁸⁶, the EP resolution on the "Trade for all strategy"⁸⁷ called for local and regional authorities to be consulted in trade negotiations and for the introduction of mitigation measures in regions that lose out as a result of increased trade.

The Committee continued to disseminate and discuss these messages with the EC in view of the preparation of the EC's reflection papers on Harnessing Globalisation and on the future of EU finances in 2017. The Committee underlined that appropriate policies to prevent or mitigate asymmetric impacts of trade agreements are crucial to ensure acceptance for an open economy and legitimacy of trade policy. The subsequently adopted EC's reflection papers highlighted the territorially uneven impact of globalisation⁸⁸ and the shared responsibility of all levels of government in both providing a democratic upgrade in the handling of globalisation and in ensuring that the benefits of globalisation are distributed fairly across different groups in society. In its reflection paper on Harnessing Globalisation, the EC recognises a number of issues previously raised by the Committee such as:

- industry in Europe remains an important pillar of the economy but needs to be modernised through investment in new manufacturing technologies and related industrial services and skills, which requires action at EU, Member State, as well as regional and local level;
- close partnership with empowered regions is essential as the costs of globalisation are often localised whereas its benefits are widely spread.

Consequently, when the EP INTA committee had its first exchange of view on the EC's reflection paper on Harnessing Globalisation, the Committee rapporteur was invited to speak⁸⁹.

In its opinion on *Strengthening territorial resilience: empowering regions and cities to face globalisation*⁹⁰ the Committee underscored the need to actively engage the local and regional level in the EU's response to globalisation by further developing the concept of "territorial resilience in a globalised world". This has to be built around three main axes:

84 See point 19 of ECON-VI/029 adopted on 23 March 2018

85 http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/december/tradoc_156487.pdf.

86 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Trade for all: Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy COM(2015) 497 final, Richmond Neale (IE/EPP)

87 EP rapporteur Tiziana Beghin (EFD/IT).

88 See, for instance, map on the risk factor per region in relation to globalisation and technological change contained in the Reflection Paper on the Future of Finances, p.16.

89 The intervention took place at the INTA committee meeting on 16 May 2018.

90 ECON-VI/024 - Reflection paper on Harnessing Globalisation - rapporteur Micaela Fanelli (IT/PES).

- a clear *pro-active strategy* on improving skills, knowledge, infrastructure, and thus regional competitiveness so as to help all EU territories to harness the opportunities of globalisation and anticipate its impact;
- a *mitigation strategy* including the European Globalisation adjustment Fund and other social policy instruments so as to cope with the pressure of globalisation on certain territories, and
- a *participative strategy* built on democratic accountability at European, national, regional and local level so as to better involve citizens in EU policy-making.

Regarding in particular the question of impact assessments raised by Committee rapporteur at the S&D Conference on the Future of EU Trade Policy (EP, 29-30 November 2017), Commissioner Malmström indicated that the EC recognises the importance of this request, but does not have the resources to undertake territorial impact assessment for all trade agreements. Therefore, the EC asks regions to signal any concern or evidence they may have with regard to the impact of trade agreements.

2.6 Europe of the citizens is Europe of the future

Enhancing forward-looking partnerships between the European Union and its people.

2.6.1 European values and citizenship, dialogue with the citizens

Main impact:

- making the European citizens' initiative easier to use by citizens (facilitating citizens participation in European democracy);
- building alliances with the EP, EESC and civil society organisations to advocate for a more user-friendly ECI.

The Committee supports the European Citizens initiative as an important instrument of participatory democracy that allows one million EU citizens residing in at least one quarter of the Members States (now seven) to call on the EC to propose a legal act. The Committee has adopted two opinions on the European Citizens initiative⁹¹, with Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP) being rapporteur for both of them. The first one, adopted in 2015, called for a revision of the ECI regulation to make it more user-friendly for citizens to allow for effective participation. The Committee suggested in that opinion that the data requirements for signatories be simplified, and that a helpdesk service be set up by the Commission and an online collaborative platform be created for the ECI providing a forum for discussion and advice and support to organisers. All these proposals have been taken on board by the EC in the proposal for a revised ECI regulation made in September 2017. The Committee in its second opinion on the ECI adopted in March 2018 calls, however, for further changes (establishment of a "wise committee" to decide on the admissibility of the initiatives or the extension of the period of collection of signatures from 12 to 18 months) to enable the ECI to truly give a voice to citizens in EU-policy making. The proposal is now awaiting the opinion of the EP's AFCO Committee.

The Committee rapporteur held bilateral and joint meetings with EP rapporteur György Schöpflin (HU/EPP), EESC rapporteur Kinga Joo and civil society organisations (European Citizens Action Service, ECI Campaign and Democracy International) to build alliances around the new EC proposal. Think-tanks (i.e.: Bertelsmann Stiftung) have also echoed the Committee's opinion⁹² and proposals in their recent policy brief on the ECI.

Reflecting on Europe opinion

Main impact:

- debates on the future of Europe have been held in all Committee Commissions on the future of Europe, followed by the adoption of relevant opinions. As of April 2017, exchanges of views and debates on the future of Europe have taken place in each CIVEX commission meeting;
- survey and study "Reflecting on the future of the European Union" by the London School of Economics (LSE). The survey was open in September 2017, the main findings of the study

⁹¹ CIVEX-VI/005 - European Citizens' Initiative - rapporteur Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP) adopted in October 2015 and CIVEX-VI/028 - European Citizens Initiative – rapporteur: Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP) adopted in March 2018

⁹² <http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/5720/>

were presented in the April 2018 CIVEX commission meeting and the study will be published in October 2018;

- 22 September 2017, the conference "Serving peace" was held jointly with the Normandy Region in Caen, back-to-back with the 15th CIVEX commission meeting;
- 10 April 2018, the conference "The future of the EU and the role of the regions" was co-organised in Brussels with the University of Tübingen and the Danube University in Krems.

The Committee has been closely involved in the broad reflection on the future of Europe, following a referral in November 2016 from the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. The opinion "Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union"⁹³, whose co-rapporteurs are the President and the Vice-President of the Committee, will be adopted in October 2018.

The opinion will be built mainly on three pillars: the outcomes of the debates in Committee plenaries and commissions and the main findings of relevant conferences co-organised by the Committee. Every Committee commission held at least one debate dedicated to the reflection on the future of Europe, in most cases related to the adoption of an opinion. The Committee's plenary adopted a resolution on the "European Commission White Paper: Reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025" on 12 May 2017. As for the CIVEX commission, further to the debates in the meetings two relevant conferences were organised.

On 22 September 2017, the conference "Serving peace" was jointly held with the Normandy Region. The topic of the conference was chosen together with the host region, which is also putting forward several initiatives, including a partnership with the European Parliament, to promote the value of peace and thereby reconnecting citizens with the European project. Moreover, the conference took place in the context of the reflection papers of the EC covering key topics for the future of the European Union, among which the reflection paper on the future of European defence. Several topics were addressed by the speakers, including both academics, Committee and ARLEM members and representatives of EU institutions. We could mention the topic of "sustainable peace" as an obligation towards the future generations and of "cross generation democracy", i.e. mechanisms to protect future generations and guarantee them an adequate future; the need to work extensively with EU neighbouring countries, also enhancing cooperation with organisations such as the UN and NATO; the concept of peace as a process of permanently living together whereby LRAs play a major role; the link between peace and the prevention of radicalisation; the link between peace and education, both in terms of history and the values on which the European Union is founded.

On 10 April 2018, the conference "The future of the EU and the role of the regions" took place. Framed in the wider debate on the future of Europe, it was aimed both at exploring the meaning of "Europe of the regions", that was broadly discussed in the 1990s but still does not appear to have been fully implemented, and how regions can feed into the ongoing debate about the future of the EU: many proposals on the table are quite "region-blind" – even if their follow-up might affect significantly the future role of regions in the EU framework. The conference was structured around a panel debate and

⁹³

CIVEX-VI/021 - Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union – rapporteurs: Karl-Heinz Lambertz (BE/PES), Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)

several parallel workshops, where academics, practitioners, Committee members and MEPs took the floor⁹⁴.

- the "Reflecting on Europe" campaign;
- the main findings from the LSE survey and the study "Reflecting on the future of the European Union". The survey was sent to 1923 stakeholders, including all Committee members and alternates; 541 of them answered the questionnaire, which amounts to a response rate of around 28%, showing a clear interest in the topic. The results of the survey showed, among other things, that the debate on the future of Europe could be an opportunity to reintegrate citizens into the heart of the European project and that the role of LRAs is crucial as they represent the level of government that is closer to citizens. They can be seen through the lens of the "proximity" concept and they perceive themselves as playing an articulatory role between citizens and EU institutions. Moreover, an overall concept of "solidarity" is perceived as an essential element of the EU, though to be reinvented in light of the challenges which the EU is facing and with LRAs at the heart of this renewed model.

Citizens' dialogues

Main impact:

- as part of the Reflecting on Europe process, more than 160 Citizens' Dialogues have been organised throughout Europe, with the involvement of more than 170 members of the Committee and the participation of around 17 000 citizens. Other events will be organised in the run-up to the 2019 European elections;
- the Committee also asked local debate participants and people around Europe to share their opinions and concerns via an online survey and a mobile App called "Have your say on the future of Europe". So far, around 20 000 people have given their views on what the future of Europe should look like.

The first findings of the ongoing "Reflecting on Europe" process are summarised in an Intermediate Report⁹⁵ presented at the April 2018 CIVEX commission meeting and shared EU wide. A full report on the Reflecting on Europe campaign will be delivered by October 2018 and the main outcomes will feed into the opinion "Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union". By May 2019 it is expected that 250 local events will have been organised with 260 CoR members and that around 45 000 citizens will have participated in the online survey/mobile application "**Have your say on Europe**".

In view of the European elections in May 2019, the Committee will continue its Citizens' Dialogues and support locally the awareness-raising campaign for the EP elections.

2.6.2 Education, Culture and Youth

The main impacts in this important area was as follows:

⁹⁴ Recordings of the Conference can be viewed here: http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/The-future-of-the-EU-webstreaming-page.html?utm_source=ShortURL&utm_medium=Other&utm_campaign=The-future-of-the-EU-webstreaming.

⁹⁵ COR-2018-01230-00-00-DT-TRA

- EC proposal for regulation takes on board several points from the Committee opinion on "Investing in Europe's Youth and the European Solidarity Corps";
- the Committee builds alliances at Stakeholder fora on the matter.

Young people have a central place in the debate on the future of Europe, as they bring new and innovative ideas and it is upon them that the future competitiveness of our economies depends; they are the ones who will live in the renewed European Union. The 2017 State of the Union address included a reference to the newest youth initiative – the European Solidarity Corps (ESC). Moreover, in the area of youth, the Trio Presidency is working towards promoting youth development and ensuring systematic, complete and full-fledged youth involvement in peace development and conflict prevention, which are the foundations of democracy.

The Committee opinion on "**Investing in Europe's Youth and the European Solidarity Corps**"⁹⁶ notes as key messages the need to promote the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) by putting in place an administrative system that would simplify participation in volunteering activities⁹⁷. The Committee position was taken on board in both the European Parliament's resolution on ESC⁹⁸ and the European Commission's proposal for a regulation⁹⁹. Moreover, the Committee called for a uniform validation system for the recognition of transferable skills gained through non-formal education and for a focus on local volunteering; both of which received support in the Parliament resolution on the ESC.

The follow-up work of the Committee opinion on "Investing in Europe's Youth and the European Solidarity Corps", includes active alliance-building at Stakeholder fora (such as those organised by the EC where Committee President Markkula participated) and other events, such as workshops during the EWRC addressing youth on employment and youth civic participation in the European Union, Committee plenary sessions or the SEDEC seminar on "Culture unites the Community", where young speakers were asked to share their experience and contribution to the European Solidarity Corps.

⁹⁶ SEDEC-VI/023- Investing in Europe's youth and the European Solidarity Corps - rapporteur: Paweł Grzybowski (PL/ECR)

⁹⁷ Both for participants and for civil society organisations.

⁹⁸ Point 10 - Underlines that the vast majority of volunteering takes place at local level and meets local needs, and the ESC should therefore initially focus on locally based volunteering, rather than on cross-border opportunities, which require international mobility and may exclude persons from disadvantaged backgrounds

⁹⁹ COM(2017)262/888104; Point 11 - Young people's spirit of initiative is an important asset for society and for the labour market. The European Solidarity Corps should contribute to fostering this aspect by offering young people the opportunity to devise and implement their own projects aimed at addressing specific challenges to the benefit of their local communities.

3 Conclusions – Outlook

Through its 71 opinions in 2017 and the impact of opinions adopted in previous years, this report shows the range and effectiveness of the work of the CoR. The work of the Committee was closely linked to the political agenda of the European Union as a whole, including the EC's White Paper on the Future of Europe and the Leaders Agenda of the European Council. Our plenary sessions attracted the Presidents of European Institutions, Commissioners and national Government ministers.

Through interaction with the six policy commissions, the CoR has not only fulfilled its role under the Treaties, but went beyond that with initiatives such as "Reflecting on Europe", in which members engage in dialogue with citizens. Moreover, with European-level associations, we have been at the heart of the creation of the #CohesionAlliance that is now starting to demonstrate its true value. And we have showcased examples of where regions, cities and local authorities, acting together, are able to deliver on EU policies ranging from investment and the economy to migration and climate change.

There are three particularly important areas of work to look forward to in 2018:

First, the opinion of the President and First Vice-President which will be finalised in the second half of the year and which will culminate in the annual speech on the "State of the European Union: the view of Regions and Cities". This will complete the process of "Reflecting on Europe" launched by the Committee at its plenary session in October 2016. It will also take account of the final report of the "Task force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently" set up on 14 November 2017. This represents a potential opportunity for greater clarity in defining the formal role of the CoR in respect of these important principles.

Second, the future financing of the European Union will be centre-stage. Beyond its preparatory work on the MFF and the system of own-resources, the Committee will engage in the second half of 2018 in a detailed review of each legislative proposal for the future EU programmes. More than 30 formal opinions will be adopted together with an overview of the future MFF coordinated by a rapporteur-general.

Finally, looking ahead, there is the opportunity for the Committee to contribute further to the future of Europe at the 8th EU Summit of Regions and Cities which will take place on 14-15 March 2019 in Bucharest. This could help build an even stronger role for the regions, cities and local authorities in future EU policy-making. More important still, it offers a platform for local and regional elected politicians to send a strong signal to the leaders of the EU 27 meeting ahead of the next European elections.

4 Appendix

4.1 Appendix 1: List of opinions included in this report

CIVEX

- CIVEX-VI/005 - European Citizens' Initiative - rapporteur: Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP)
- CIVEX-VI/015 - Integration of third country nationals – rapporteur: Karl Vanlouwe (BE/EA)
- CIVEX-VI/020 - Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability – rapporteur: Franco Iacop (IT/PES)
- CIVEX-VI/028 - Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European citizens' initiative - rapporteur: Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP)
- CIVEX-VI/029 - Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration – rapporteur: Dimitris Kalogeropoulos (EL/EPP)
- CIVEX-VI/021 - Reflecting on Europe: the voice of local and regional authorities to rebuild trust in the European Union – rapporteurs: Karl-Heinz Lambertz (BE/PES), Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)

COTER

- COTER-VI/012 - Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities - rapporteur: Petr Osvald (CZ/PES)
- COTER-VI/015 - The Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 - rapporteur: Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)
- COTER-VI/016 - Missing transport links in border regions - rapporteur: Michiel Scheffer (NL/ALDE)
- COTER-VI/020 - The financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union - rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE)
- COTER-VI/023 - People-to-people and small scale projects in cross-border cooperation programmes - rapporteur: Pavel Branda (CZ/ECR)
- COTER-VI/025 - Towards an European Agenda for Housing - rapporteur: Hicham Imane (BE/PES)
- COTER-VI/026 - A new legal instrument for cross-border cooperation – rapporteur: Hans Niessl (AT/PES)
- COTER-VI/036 - Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions - rapporteur: János Ádám Karácsony (HU/EPP)
- COTER-VI/038 - Assessing Territorial Impacts - rapporteur: Michael Schneider (DE/EPP)

ECON

- ECOS-V/063 - The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) - rapporteur: Markus Töns (DE/PES)
- ECON-VI/003 - The local and regional dimension of the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) - rapporteur: Helmuth Markov (DE/PES)
- ECON-VI/009 - A more responsible trade and investment policy - rapporteur: Neale Richmond (IE/EPP)
- ECON-VI/014 - Bridging the Investment Gap: How to Tackle the Challenges - rapporteur: Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)
- ECON-VI/019 - Improving the governance of the European Semester: a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities - rapporteur: Rob Jonkman (NL/ECR)
- ECON-VI/024 - Strengthening territorial resilience: empowering regions and cities to face globalisation - rapporteur: Micaela Fanelli (IT/PES)
- ECON-VI/031 - The amended SRSP and new budgetary instruments for the euro area – rapporteur: Olga ZRIHEN (BE/PES)

ENVE

- DEVE-IV/026 - Industrial Emission - rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP)
- ENVE-V/017 - Review of EU Air Quality a Emissions Policy - rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP)
- ENVE-V/046 - The Clean Air Policy Package for Europe - rapporteur: Cor Lamers (NL/EPP)
- ENVE-VI/005 - Contribution to the fitness check on the EU Birds and Habitats Directives - rapporteur: Roby Biber (LU/PES)
- ENVE-VI/008 - EU environment law: improving reporting and compliance - rapporteur: Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE)
- ENVE-VI/010 - Legislative proposals amending waste directives - rapporteur: Domenico Gambacorta (IT/EPP)
- ENVE-VI/011 - Closing the loop – An EU action plan for the Circular Economy - rapporteur: Babette Winter (DE/PES)
- ENVE-VI/013 - Delivering the global climate agreement – a territorial approach to COP22 in Marrakesh – rapporteur: Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES)
- ENVE-VI/015 – Towards a new EU climate change adaptation strategy – taking an integrated approach - rapporteur: Sirpa Hertell (FI/EPP)
- ENVE-VI/017 - Legislative proposals for an Effort-Sharing Regulation and a LULUCF Regulation - rapporteur: Juri Gotmans (EE/PES)
- ENVE-VI/018 - Energy Union governance and clean energy - rapporteur: Bruno Hranic (HR/EPP)

- ENVE-VI/019 - Opinion on Energy efficiency and buildings - rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE)
- ENVE-VI/020 - Opinion Renewable energy and internal electricity market - rapporteur: Daiva Matoniene (LT/ECR)
- ENVE-VI/021 - Delivering the benefits of EU environmental policies through a regular Environmental Implementation Review - rapporteur: Andrew Varah Cooper (UK/EA)
- ENVE-VI/022 - Space Strategy for Europe - rapporteur: Andres Jaadla (ET/ALDE)
- ENVE-VI/024 - Climate finance as an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement - rapporteur: Marco Dus (IT/PES)

NAT

- NAT-VI/006 - The simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) - rapporteur: Anthony Gerard Buchanan (UK/EA)
- NAT-VI/008 - Food waste – rapporteur: Ossi Martikainen (FI/ALDE)
- NAT-VI/010 - The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues– rapporteur: Ewa-May Karlsson (SE/ALDE)
- NAT-VI/011 - Technical measures in fisheries – rapporteur: Emily Westley (UK/PES)
- NAT-VI/012 Supporting young European farmers - rapporteur: Arnold Hatch (UK/ECR)
- NAT-VI/013 -Regulating price volatility of agricultural products - rapporteur: Jacques Blanc (FR/EPP)
- NAT-VI/015 - Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. A disaster risk-informed approach for all EU policies - rapporteur Adam Banaszak (PL/ECR)
- NAT-VI/018 – International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans rapporteur: Anthony Gerard Buchanan (UK/EA)
- NAT-VI/019 - A new stage in the European policy on blue growth – rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau (FR/PES)
- NAT-VI/021 - Future of the CAP after 2020 - rapporteur: Guillaume Cros (FR/PES)
- NAT-VI/022 - Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area Delivering smart - rapporteur: sustainable and inclusive growth - rapporteur: Jerry Lundy (IE/ALDE)
- NAT-VI/023 - Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean - rapporteur: Samuel Azzopardi (MT/EPP)
- NAT-VI/025 - Revitalisation of rural areas through Smart Villages - rapporteur: Enda Stenson (IE/EA)

SEDEC

- SEDEC-VI/003 - Review of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive - rapporteur: Jean-François Istasse (BE/PES)
- SEDEC-VI/009 - Modernisation of the EU copyright rules - rapporteur: Arnoldas Abramavicius (LT/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/010 - The European Pillar of Social Rights - rapporteur: Heinz-Joachim Höfer (DE/PES)
- SEDEC-VI/011 - The Revision of the Posting of Workers Directive - rapporteur: Yoomi Renström (SE/PES)
- SEDEC-VI/013 - eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 - rapporteur: Martin Andreasson (SE/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/014 - Digitising European Industry - rapporteur: Kieran Mccarthy (IE/EA)
- SEDEC-VI/016 - Review of the audio-visual and media services Directive (AMSD) - rapporteur: Jacint Horvath (HU/PES)
- SEDEC-VI/018 - Review of the telecom package - rapporteur: Mart Vorklaev (EE/ALDE)
- SEDEC-VI/019 - Copyright in the Digital Single Market - rapporteur: Mauro D'Attis (IT/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/021 - Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3): impact for regions and inter-regional cooperation - rapporteur: Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA)
- SEDEC-VI/023- Investing in Europe's youth and the European Solidarity Corps .- rapporteur: Paweł Grzybowski (PL/ECR)
- SEDEC-VI/025 - Building a European Data Economy - rapporteur: Kieran Mccarthy (IE/EA)
- SEDEC-VI/026 - Local and Regional Dimension of Horizon 2020 and the New Framework Programme for Research and Innovation - rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau (FR/PES)
- SEDEC-VI/027 - The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe - rapporteur: Mauro D'Attis (IT/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/030 - Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions - rapporteur: Frank Cecconi (FR/ALDE)
- SEDEC-VI/031 - Digital Single Market: Mid-term review - rapporteur: Alin-Adrian Nica (RO/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/032 - Strengthening Innovation in Europe's Regions: Strategies for resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth - rapporteur: Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA)
- SEDEC-VI/034 - Boosting broadband connectivity in Europe – rapporteur: Mart Vörklaev (EE/ALDE)

4.2 Appendix 2: List of opinions adopted in 2017

CIVEX

- CIVEX-VI/016 - Partnership Framework with third countries on Migration - rapporteur: Peter Bossman (SI/PES)
- CIVEX-VI/017 – Reform of the Common European Asylum System – Package II and a Union Resettlement Framework – rapporteur: Vincenzo Bianco (IT/PES)
- CIVEX-VI/018 - 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy - Rait Pihelgas (EE/ALDE)
- CIVEX-VI/019 - Proposal for a new European Consensus on Development – Our World, our Dignity, our Future - rapporteur: Jesús Gamallo Aller (ES/EPP).
- CIVEX-VI/020 - Next steps for a sustainable European future - European action for sustainability - rapporteur: Franco Iacop (IT/PES).
- CIVEX-VI/022 - EU Citizenship Report 2017 - rapporteur: Guillermo Martínez Suárez (ES/PES).
- CIVEX-VI/023 - Migration on the Central Mediterranean route - Managing flows, saving lives - rapporteur: Hans Janssen (NL/EPP).
- CIVEX-VI/025 - The protection of children in migration - rapporteur: Yoomi Renström (SE/PES).
- CIVEX-VI/026 - Legal acts providing for the use of the regulatory procedure with scrutiny - rapporteur: François Decoster (FR/ALDE).
- CIVEX-VI/027 - A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action - rapporteur: Marcin Ociepa (PL/ECR).

COTER

- COTER-VI/015 - The Future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020 - rapporteur: Michael Schneider (DE/EPP).
- COTER-VI/016 - Missing transport links in border regions - rapporteur: Michiel Scheffer (NL/ALDE).
- COTER-VI/017 - Union policy for the Arctic - rapporteur: Pauliina Haijanen (FI/EPP).
- COTER-VI/018 - Regeneration of Port Cities and Port Areas - rapporteur: Stanisław Szwabski (PL/EA).
- COTER-VI/020 - Financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union - rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE).
- COTER-VI/021 - A European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility - rapporteur: József Ribányi (HU/EPP).
- COTER-VI/022 - Entrepreneurship on Islands: contributing towards territorial cohesion - rapporteur: Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis (FR/EA).
- COTER-VI/023 - People-to-people and small scale projects in cross-border cooperation programmes - rapporteur: Pavel Branda (CZ/ECR).
- COTER-VI/024 - Territorial classification and typologies - rapporteur: Mieczysław Struk (PL/EPP).
- COTER-VI/025 - Towards a European Agenda for Housing - rapporteur: Hicham Imane (BE/PES).

- COTER–VI/026 – Reform of EU own resources within the next MFF post-2020 - rapporteur: Isabelle Boudineau (FR/PES).
- COTER–VI/027 - Future of CEF Transport - rapporteur: Ximo Puig i Ferrer (ES/PES).
- COTER–VI/028 - A European strategy on Cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems - rapporteur: Bouke Arends (NL/PES).
- COTER–VI/029 - The implementation of macro-regional strategies - rapporteur: Raffaele Cattaneo (IT/EPP).

ECON

- ECON–VI/014 - Bridging the Investment Gap: How to Tackle the Challenges - rapporteur: Markku Markkula (FI/EPP)
- ECON–VI/018 – Fiscal Capacity and Automatic Stabilisers in the Economic and Monetary Union - rapporteur: Carl Fredrik Graf (SE/EPP).
- ECON–VI/019 - Improving the governance of the European Semester: a Code of Conduct for the involvement of local and regional authorities - rapporteur: Rob Jonkman (NL/ECR).
- ECON–VI/020 - Smart Regulation for SMEs - rapporteur: Christian Buchmann (AT/EPP).
- ECON–VI/021 - Boosting start-ups and scale-ups in Europe: regional and local perspective - rapporteur: Tadeusz Truskolaski (PL/EA).
- ECON–VI/022 - The services package: A services economy that works for Europeans - rapporteur: Jean-Luc Vanraes (BE/ALDE).
- ECON–VI/023 - The European Commission Report on Competition Policy 2016 - rapporteur: Michael Murphy (IE/EPP).
- ECON–VI/024 - Strengthening territorial resilience: empowering regions and cities to face globalization - rapporteur: Micaela Fanelli (IT/PES).
- ECON–VI/025 - Reflection Paper on the Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union by 2025 - rapporteur: Christophe Rouillon (FR/PES).

ENVE

- ENVE–VI/014 - Effective water management system: an approach to innovative solutions - rapporteur: Cees Loggen (NL/ALDE).
- ENVE–VI/015 – Towards a new EU climate change adaptation strategy – taking an integrated approach - rapporteur: Sirpa Hertell (FI/EPP).
- ENVE–VI/016 - Mid-term evaluation of the LIFE Programme – rapporteur: Witold Stępień (PL/EPP)
- ENVE–VI/017 - Legislative proposals for an Effort-Sharing Regulation and a Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Regulation (LULUCF) - rapporteur: Juri Gotmans (EE/PES).
- ENVE–VI/018 - Energy Union and clean energy – rapporteur: Bruno Hranić (HR/EPP)
- ENVE–VI/019 - Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency– rapporteur: Michiel Rijsberman (NL/ALDE)
- ENVE–VI/020 - The promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (recast) – rapporteur: Daiva Matonienė (LT/ECR)
- ENVE–VI/021 – Delivering the benefits of EU environmental policies through a regular Environmental Implementation Review - rapporteur: Andrew Varah Cooper (GB/EA).

- ENVE-VI/022 - Space Strategy for Europe – rapporteur: Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE)
- ENVE-VI/023 - The role of waste-to-energy in the circular economy – rapporteur: Kata Tüttő (HU/PES)
- ENVE-VI/024 - Climate finance: an essential tool for the implementation of the Paris Agreement – rapporteur: Marco Dus (IT/PES)

NAT

- NAT-VI/010 - The need for and way towards an EU strategy on alcohol-related issues– rapporteur: Ewa-May Karlsson (SE/ALDE)
- NAT-VI/012 - Supporting young European farmers – rapporteur: Arnold Hatch (UK/ECR)
- NAT-VI/014 Towards a sustainable EU food policy that creates jobs and growth in Europe's Regions and Cities – rapporteur: Arno Kompatscher (IT/EPP)
- NAT-VI/015 - Action Plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 – rapporteur: Adam Banaszak (PL/ECR)
- NAT-VI/016 - Health in cities: the common good – rapporteur: Roberto Pella (IT/EPP)
- NAT-VI/017 - Integration, cooperation and performance of health systems – rapporteur: Birgitta Sacrédeus (SE/EPP)
- NAT-VI/018 – International ocean governance: an agenda for the future of our oceans rapporteur: Anthony Gerard Buchanan (UK/EA)
- NAT-VI/019 - A new stage in the European policy on blue growth – rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau (FR/PES)
- NAT-VI/020 - A European policy on the seismic requalification of buildings and infrastructure– rapporteur: Vito Santarsiero (IT/PES)
- NAT-VI/021 - CAP post 2020 – rapporteur: Guillaume Cros (FR/PES)
- NAT-VI/024 - Deinstitutionalisation in Care systems at local and regional level – rapporteur: Xamuel GONZALEZ Westling (SE/PES)
- NAT-VI/025 - Revitalisation of rural areas through Smart Villages – rapporteur: Enda Stenson (IE/EA)
- NAT-VI/022 - Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic area Delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth - – rapporteur: Jerry Lundy (IE/ALDE)

SEDEC

- SEDEC-VI/017 - Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations – rapporteur: Apostolos Tzitzikostas (GR/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/018 - Review of the telecom package – rapporteur: Mart Vörklaev (EE/ALDE)
- SEDEC-VI/019 - Copyright in the digital single market – rapporteur: Mauro D'attis (IT/EPP)
- SEDEC-VI/020 - Social innovation as a new tool for addressing societal challenges – rapporteur: Marcelle Hendrickx (NL/ALDE)
- SEDEC-VI/021 - Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3): impact for regions and inter-regional cooperation – rapporteur: Mikel Irujo Amezaga (ES/EA)
- SEDEC-VI/022 - The Local and Regional dimension of the Bioeconomy and the role of cities and regions – rapporteur: Katrin Budde (DE)
- SEDEC-VI/023 - Investing in Europe's youth and the European Solidarity Corps – rapporteur: Paweł Grzybowski (PL/ECR)

- SEDEC–VI/024 - Coordination of Social Security Systems – rapporteur: Ulrike Hiller (DE/PES)
- SEDEC–VI/025 - Building a European Data Economy – rapporteur: Kieran Mccarthy (IE/EA)
- SEDEC–VI/026 - Local and Regional Dimension of Horizon 2020 and the New Framework Programme for Research and Innovation – rapporteur: Christophe Clergeau (FR/PES)
- SEDEC–VI/027 - The European Pillar of Social Rights and Reflection paper on the social dimension of Europe – rapporteur: Mauro D'attis (IT/EPP)
- SEDEC–VI/028 - Work-life balance for parents and carers – rapporteur: Nathalie Sarrabezolles (FR/PES)
- SEDEC–VI/029 - Modernising school and higher education – rapporteur: Csaba Borboly (RO/EPP)
- SEDEC–VI/030 - Local and regional perspective on promoting public sector innovation via digital solutions – rapporteur: Frank Ceconi (FR/ALDE)

4.3 Appendix 3: Meetings in 2017 in figures

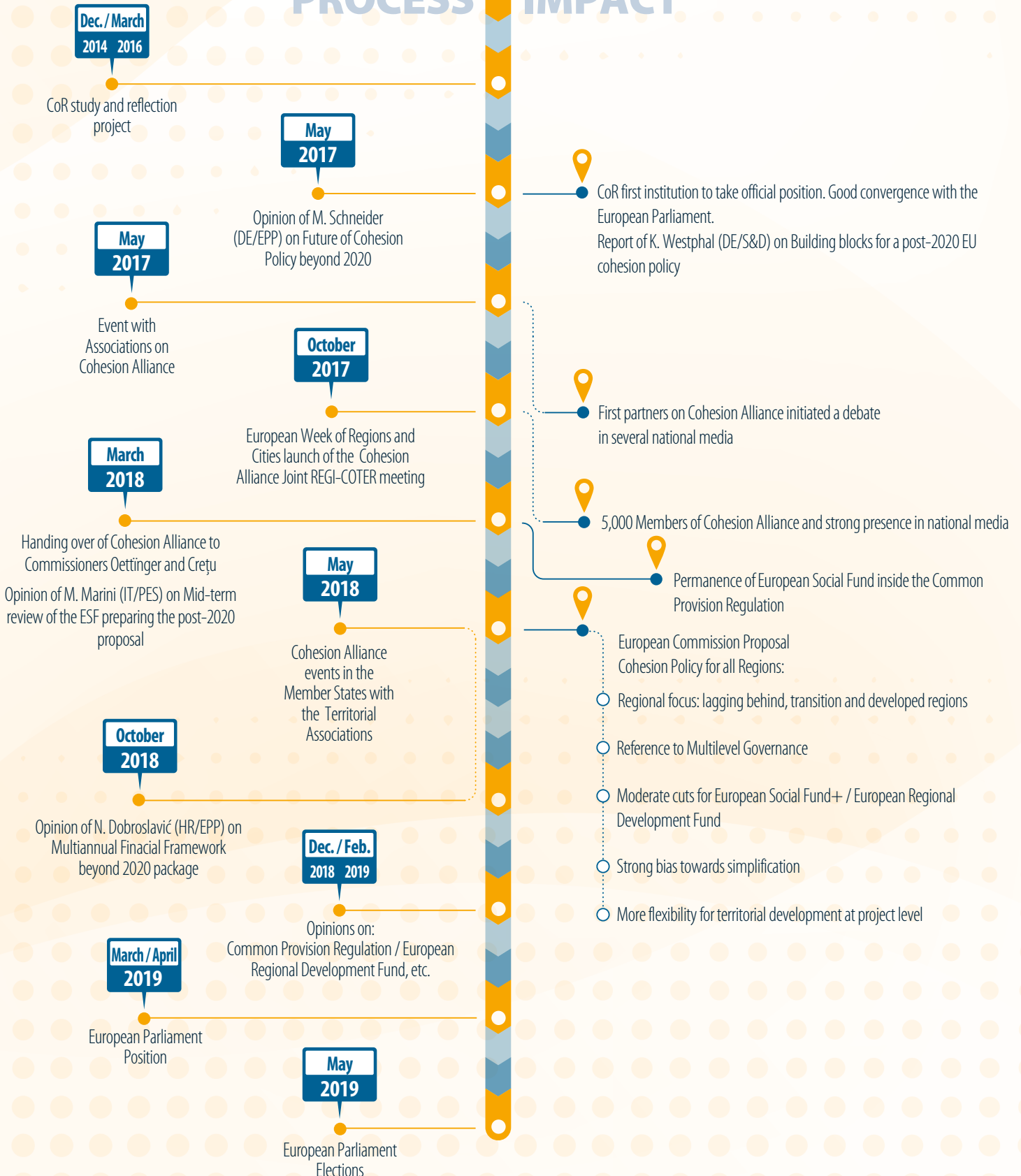
Meeting	2017
Number of MEPs in commission meetings	79
Number of Committee rapporteurs participating in EP committee meetings	14
Number of bilateral meetings between Committee and EP rapporteurs	52
Number of bilateral meetings between Committee rapporteurs and EC	86
Number of bilateral meetings between Committee rapporteurs and Permanent Representations on legislative dossiers	13
Participation of the Committee in events of the EU Presidency	24

4.4 Appendix 4: References for the 6 Committee Commissions' contributions to the Impact Report 2017

Commission	Presentation of the document (meeting date)	Reference number of the document
CIVEX	6 February 2018	COR-2017-06106-00-00-TCD-TRA
COTER	27 February 2018	COR-2018-00035-00-00-TCD-TRA
ECON	23 January 2018	COR-2017-06128-00-00-TCD-TRA
ENVE	8 February 2018	COR-2017-06037-00-01-TCD-TRA
NAT	22 January 2018	COR-2017-05652-00-01-TCD-TRA
SEDEC	21 February 2018	COR-2017-06127-00-01-TCD-TRA



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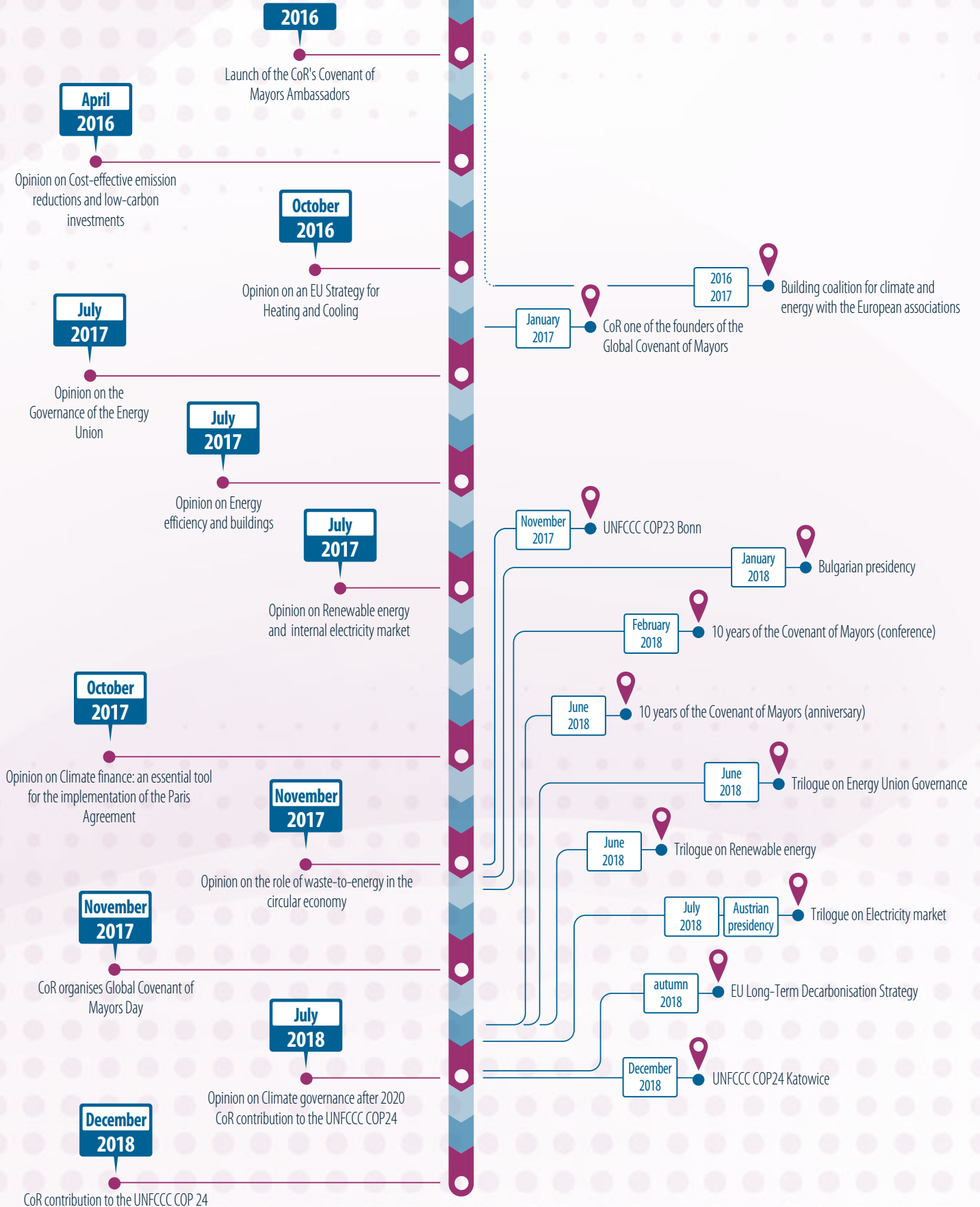




Climate Change and Energy

Regions getting results

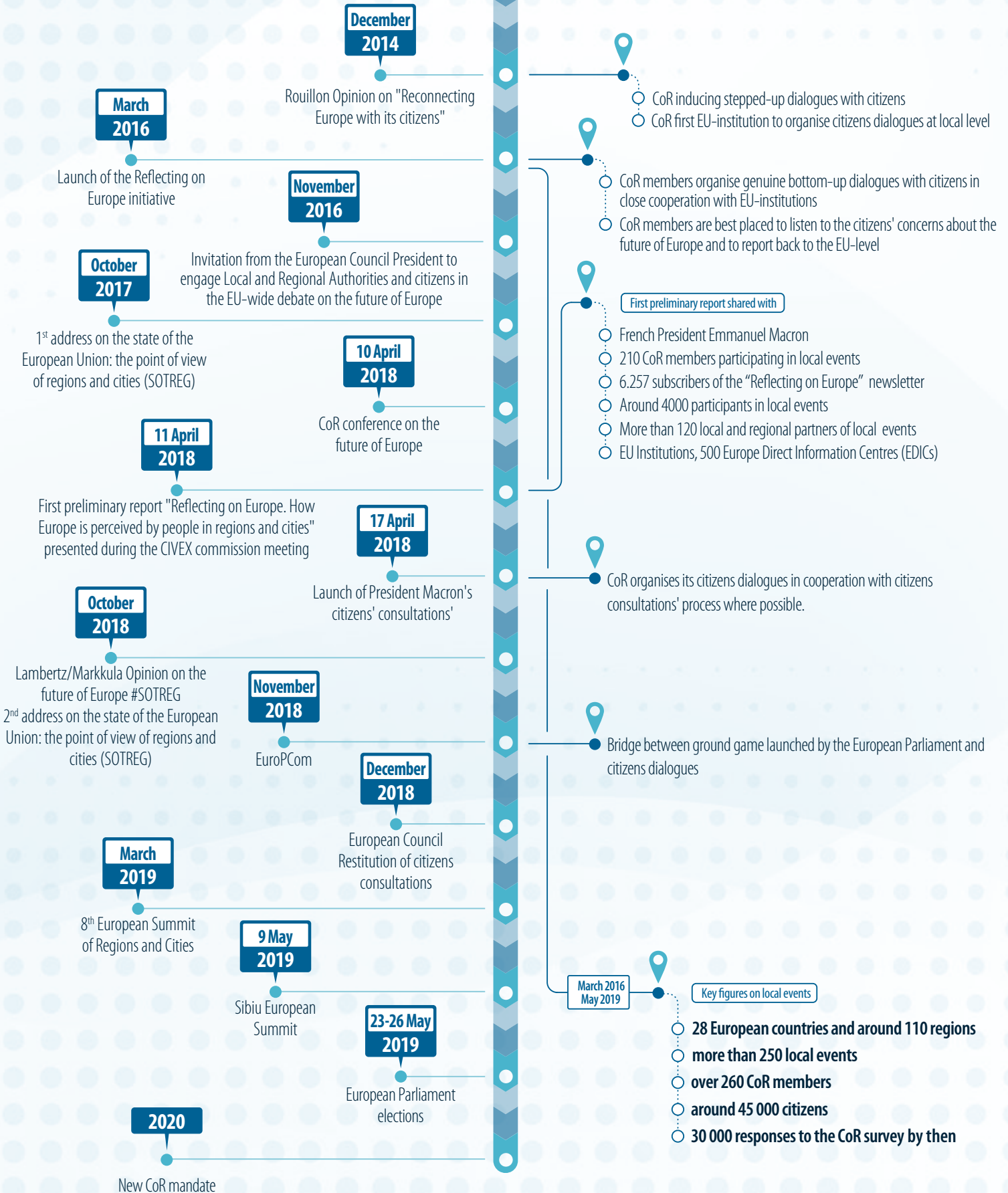
PROCESS IMPACT





EU for citizens Citizens' Dialogues and future of Europe

PROCESS IMPACT





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.

Edited by the Directorate for Communication of the European Committee of the Regions

Brussels, July 2018

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