



**European Committee
of the Regions**



Annual Activity Report for 2023

European Committee of the Regions

May 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
1. POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS	5
2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL OPERATIONAL WORKING PLAN PER CORE BUSINESS FUNCTION	10
2.1 GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS AND ICONS	10
2.2 SECRETARIATS OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS	12
2.3 SERVICE / DIRECTORATE PER CORE BUSINESS FUNCTION	13
2.4 SERVICE / DIRECTORATE PER CORE BUSINESS FUNCTION	15
3. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL SYSTEMS, AUDIT AND FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY FINANCIAL CONTROL BODIES	46
3.1 INHERENT NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COR RISK ENVIRONMENT	46
3.2 INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM	46
3.3 INTERNAL FINANCIAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK	46
3.4 BUDGET PLANNING, EXECUTION AND MONITORING	47
3.5 FINANCIAL INITIATION AND VERIFICATION	47
3.6 EX-POST CONTROL	48
3.7 EXCEPTION REPORTS	48
3.8 COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF CONTROLS	48
3.9 PUBLIC PROCUREMENT	49
3.10 INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION	49
4. STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY	50
5. ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE	51
6. THE DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE	52
7. ANNEXES	53
7.1 ANNEX 1: FINANCIAL RESOURCES	54
7.2 ANNEX 2 - DECLARATIONS OF THE AUTHORISING OFFICERS BY SUB-DELEGATION	60
7.3 ANNEX 3 - TRANSFERS OF APPROPRIATIONS	62
7.4 ANNEX 4 - NEGOTIATED PROCEDURES 2023	65
7.5 ANNEX 5 – REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH AND SUSPENSION OF TIME-LIMITS FOR PAYMENT OF THE INSTITUTION'S CREDITORS	66
7.6 ANNEX 6 - PROVISIONAL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023	67
7.7 ANNEX 7: HUMAN RESOURCES FIGURES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ESTIMATES FOR 2023	70
7.8 ANNEX 8 : BUILDING POLICY	72
7.9 ANNEX 9 – SAMPLE OF ACTIVITIES OF THE COR INVOLVING MEMBERS IN 2023	76
7.10 ANNEX 10 - FOLLOW-UP TO THE 2022 DISCHARGE RESOLUTION	79

INTRODUCTION

The Annual Activity Report is a key component of the strategic and programming cycle. It is the basis on which the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) takes its responsibility for the management of resources and the achievement of objectives, as a mirror of the Strategic Management Plan.

This Annual Report of the Authorising Officer by Delegation (the Secretary-General) is established on the basis of Art. 74(9) of the Financial Regulation, the CoR's Rules of Procedure (rule 69.2), the internal rules on the implementation of the budget and the Charter of tasks and responsibilities of the Committee's Authorising Officer by Delegation.

As required by the above provisions, the Annual Activity Report covers the activities of the institution (the objectives and main achievements of the year under review), as well as the budget execution within the parameters of the control environment. The report also contains a declaration, signed by the Authorising Officer by Delegation, on the application of the principle of sound financial management to the use of the resources and on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions in 2023.

Part 1 of the report is a brief summary of the political achievements of the institution in 2023.

Part 2 presents the main achievements and activities compared against the objectives set in the Annual Operational Working Plan 2023.

Part 3 reports on the internal management and control systems. It outlines the characteristics of the CoR risk environment and gives a detailed description of internal control systems, such as verification, internal control standards and financial exceptions reporting. In addition, the chapter reports on actions taken on the comments and recommendations from the various supervisory bodies: recommendations made in connection with the budgetary discharge, the reports of the Court of Auditors as well as the internal audits.

Part 4 contains the progress made by the CoR as regards building a more inclusive, gender-equal and fair EU, by a dedicated Gender Equality Action Plan.

Part 5 includes the comments made by the Authorising Officer by Delegation on the management system he has put in place.

Finally, Part 6 is the declaration by the Authorising Officer by Delegation.

1. POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

The European Committee of the Regions (the CoR) is a Political Assembly of 658 elected representatives of Local and Regional Authorities (329 Members and 329 Alternates). Its mission is twofold:

- The Committee contributes to the EU policy shaping and decision-making process from the viewpoint of the Local and Regional Authorities.
- At the same time the Committee's members contribute to make the Union more effective and closer to the citizens by implementing EU law and communicating on the Union's policies on the ground.

Local and regional authorities are responsible for seventy percent of the implementation of EU legislation and more than half of public investments in the European Union. They also hold in many Member States competencies in key areas such as education, economic development and social cohesion, environment, social protection, health and services of general interest. Cooperation between local, regional, national and European levels is the best response to common challenges. A European Union that takes into account local and regional needs and concerns increases the legitimacy of its legislation, improves ownership of its decisions and achieves greater added-value and effectiveness on the ground for the benefit of citizens.

To this end, the CoR works closely with the other EU institutions and with associations of local and regional authorities, as well as in the Member States with the various tiers of government. The CoR's activities, as well as the annual work programme of its commissions, are defined on the basis of the overall political strategy of the CoR, set out in the resolution on the political priorities.

2023 was the fourth year of the CoR's seventh term of office 2020-2025, under the leadership of President Vasco Alves Cordeiro and First Vice-President Apostolos Tzitzikostas.

In 2023, the CoR convened five Plenary Sessions. In April, an external Bureau meeting was held in Kiruna, as part of the Swedish Presidency of the Council. The meeting was attended by Erik Slottner, Minister for public administration for Sweden. It marked a significant milestone as the meeting was fully interpreted remotely, with interpreters located across Europe, a first for such gatherings for European institutions and bodies. Similarly, in October, an external Bureau meeting took place in Logroño during the Spanish Presidency of the Council, also interpreted remotely. The meeting was attended by Alfredo González Gómez, Secretary of State for Territorial Policy for Spain.

There are more than a million representatives elected at regional and local level in the EU. Reaching out to and engaging with all of them is a strategic key objective for the CoR. Our Members' political activity and their expertise, both in Brussels and in their constituencies, is the unique added-value and most important asset of the CoR. According to several Eurobarometer surveys local and regional elected representatives tend to be the most trusted by citizens – across the Union. CoR members are powerful multipliers in their communities and in their national associations of local and regional authorities. The Union cannot afford to neglect this asset at its disposal when it comes to strengthening the trust of European citizens.

The CoR Political priorities for the mandate 2020-2025 continued to be the guiding principles in 2023 and these were accompanied by 3 communication priorities, adopted in February 2023 by the Bureau:



1. Bringing Europe closer to its people: strengthening EU democracy and working together on the future of our Union.



2. Understand and respond to the profound societal transformations that the digital, environmental and demographic challenges entail for building resilient regional and local communities.



3. Ensure that the European Union is permanently at the service of its people and the places they live are based on social, economic and territorial cohesion as fundamental value.

The communication priority linked to the first priority includes the implementation of the CoR Roadmap towards the European elections in June 2024 as well as the longer-term ambition to contribute to participatory processes as a follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe. Furthermore, the ongoing support to the Ukrainian people and local and regional authorities was highlighted as a cross-cutting horizontal “red thread” and top priority from the outset for CoR communication work.

In order to implement these priorities, strong working relationships have been built with the Members of the European Parliament (EP) and the relevant EP committees and with European Commissioners and the thematic services of the Commission (Directorate Generals - DGs). CoR members continue to be involved along the whole political and legislative cycle of the EU policies. This is achieved through an early input into the policy-agenda setting of the European Commission, through an increased follow-up of its opinions towards the co-legislators (European Parliament; Council), or in partnership with the European Commission's services on the roll-out and evaluation of policies and legislation. At the same time, there is a continuous need to communicate these activities and their impact ever more effectively. The new cooperation agreement with the European Commission was negotiated in 2023, approved by the Bureau in January 2024 and signed on 20 March 2024. The revision of the cooperation agreement with the European Parliament was initiated in 2023 with the goal of finalising the update before the EU elections in June 2024. A specific Memorandum of Understanding with the European Parliament in view of the European elections was also negotiated in 2023 and signed in February 2024. Along the same lines, the cooperation with the European Council and the Council of the European Union needs to be strengthened in the future.

11 key priority areas have been identified by the Conference of Presidents for 2023 to make the CoR more strategic and impactful in accordance with the political priorities, while also adapting to new developments:

1. Follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe, Active Subsidiarity and Better Regulation;
2. Ukraine and Enlargement;
3. Energy and climate crisis;
4. Environment;
5. Cohesion Policy – Ramping up Cohesion policy implementation and shaping its future for the post-2027 period;
6. Multi-annual Financial Framework;
7. Economic governance for a fair and sustainable Europe;
8. European Year of Skills 2023;
9. Partnership for Regional Innovation and the promotion of territorial missions;
10. Civil protection;
11. Food security.

The CoR continued its political goal to strengthen the assembly's involvement along the whole EU political and legislative cycle, building on the existing cooperation agreements with the European Parliament and the European Commission:

- More involvement throughout all stages of the EU legislative process (European Commission, European

Parliament and Council of the EU);

- Raise the CoR's institutional profile by building even more effective and trustful partnerships with other EU Institutions;
- Put regional and local authorities at the heart of designing and implementing European policies;
- Further develop the EU's decentralised communication with and within regions and cities.

2023 political achievements

In 2023, the following political achievements can be highlighted:

- Publishing the fourth edition of the [EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities 2023](#) highlighting the main findings on the most relevant topics for local and regional authorities at the EU level. The Report generated unprecedented media and political attention;
- The 21st edition of the **European Week of Regions and Cities** confirmed itself as the largest EU inter-institutional event dedicated to cohesion themes across the EU, with 8.418 registered participants on site and over 3.000 online, including some 600 elected representatives, 244 sessions and 210 workshops;
- The own-initiative opinion on **The Future of Cohesion policy post - 2027**¹ allowed the CoR, as the first institutional actor working on the matter, to assume a pro-active and leading role on the future of cohesion policy. The Council conclusions on the future of cohesion policy adopted by the General Affairs Council on 30 November took on board many aspects that have been put forward by the (draft) CoR opinion and call for general awareness of doing no harm to cohesion in all European Union policies and initiatives;
- The **Cohesion Alliance** was relaunched together with the 6 territorial associations of regions and cities to initiate a new mobilisation on Cohesion Policy in view of the upcoming debate on the future of the policy after 2027;
- CoR first **mission to Ukraine** since the full-scale invasion in Kyiv in April 2023; CoR representing the **European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine** participated for the first time in the 2023 London Ukraine Recovery Conference, the European Parliament reflected several recommendations of the CoR opinion in its report on the establishment of the Ukraine Facility and the CoR promoted the **Summer camps for Ukrainian children** initiative further by doubling the number of children welcomed;
- Progress made by the CoR as regards building a more inclusive, gender-equal and fair EU, by improving gender equality, including in its own workings, by a dedicated **Gender Equality Action Plan** adopted by the Bureau on 9 October, and subsequent appointment of a special Bureau Rapporteur on the CoR Gender Equality Action Plan, Ms Sari Rautio;
- Strong reference to LRAs role in the EU mandate for **UNFCCC COP28**;
- CoR activities at **UNFCCC COP28** advocate for stronger inclusion of subnational governments in global climate negotiations, more ambitious

nationally determined contributions, rooted in local action, and a Global Goal on Adaptation based on targeted solutions for local communities;

- First-ever **meeting of CoR delegation with UN Secretary General Guterres** at High Level Political Forum in New York;
- Formal recognition of the CoR as key partner to implement **UN COP 15** and other relevant activities on biodiversity;
- Release of **Green Deal Going Local (GDGL) Handbook** and upscale of Members' Green Deal best practices valorisation as part of the CoR contribution to the EU's goal of climate neutrality strategy adopted by the Bureau on 04 July 2023;
- Explicit reference to the CoR work in the first **EU Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Voluntary Review** drafted by the European Commission;
- The draft Council Conclusions took on board the CoR's line on the European Semester and also gave prominent recognition to the role of the **CoR as a key driver in boosting SDGs localisation**;
- The **CoR's contribution to strengthening European democracy** was recognised by the European Parliament: references to enhancing the CoR role included in the EP report on Parliamentarism, European citizenship and democracy and in the AFCD committee opinion on European Union regulatory fitness and subsidiarity and proportionality;
- The **Mayor Pawel Adamowicz Award** ceremony, in presence of Commissioner Johansson and other high-level guests, raised the political profile of the award. Its web-streaming was viewed 3700 times (three times the usual livestream of the plenary);
- The **Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors** reached 3000 participants and gathered local and regional representatives from all 27 EU Member States. It generated relevant impact by bringing Europe closer to local communities and encouraging local and regional councillors to organise EU and CoR related activities within their regions, cities and villages.
- A great **outreach to local citizens** and fora at the occasion of the CoR external Bureau meetings in Kiruna (Sweden) and Logroño (Spain);
- In the European Commission's (EC) proposal subsequent to the **CoR opinion on Fit 4 Future**, many of the recommendation of the opinion were taken on board. Many other points of the CoR opinion², reiterating points that had not been addressed in the EC's proposal, were taken up by the Council and the European Parliament;
- The CoR secured future support by the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) on **Territorial Impact Assessment** in the context of the new ESPON 2030 programme;
- The **CoR opinion on the Critical Raw Materials Package**³ strongly influenced the European Parliament position;
- On the **Single Market Emergency Instrument**, the European Parliament report adopted amendments from the CoR opinion⁴ with specific reference to these amendments as coming from the CoR;
- The joint Horizon Europe and Interregional Innovation Investments call on **Regional Innovation Valleys** was launched by the European Commission on 17 May 2023, responding to the CoR's appeal for better synergies between the regional policy funds and the Horizon programme in support of regional innovation;
- By adopting, already in 2022, its resolution on the European Year of Skills and actively engaging in **high-level discussions on skills** policies during 2023, the CoR not only reinforced its position as a key stakeholder in this policy area;
- Several **agriculture and food policy** related CoR opinions were highly reported in the European, national and local press as well as the organic awards ceremony;
- The CoR position in the opinion "Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities" was largely echoed by the European Commission. One of the main calls in the opinion was for the development of the **territorial vulnerability scoreboard** in close collaboration with the European Commission in order to better understand and take account of the risks related to the vulnerabilities of local areas and populations to disasters and crises. This vulnerability dashboard was launched in November 2023;
- The agreement between the Parliament and the Council on the **short-term rentals** recognised the importance of timely and accurate data from the collaborative platforms and the role these have for local authorities as requested by the CoR; media highlighted how the new rules will give the city leaders better insights and more leverage to design urban development or tourism strategies. In terms of media outreach, coverage of the debate that took place in the NAT Commission meeting was extremely far-reaching extending as far as Panama and Ecuador;
- The Council Recommendation⁵ on developing **social economy framework** conditions now includes several references to the CoR opinion and to many of its key points, highlighting the potential of the social economy to generate inclusive and sustainable local growth;
- The European Parliament's **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) Pilot Project on a voucher scheme was an EU action initiated by the CoR. The Pilot will be implemented by the Joint Research Center partnering with the CoR;
- At the High-Level Policy Forum under the Spanish presidency, the EP rapporteur **on Long-term vision for the EU's rural areas** publicly acknowledged the importance of the CoR's input to her report: this report contains several CoR positions;
- The **economic transition of many automotive regions** has been addressed through the "Automotive Regions Alliance" (ARA) of the CoR and for the first time the CoR has been referred to in a legal text

2 ECON-VII/029 – Interoperable Europe Act - rapporteur: Michele Pais, (IT/ECR) - COR-2023-00152-00-00-AC-TRA

3 ECON-VII-031 - Critical Raw Materials Package, rapporteur: Isodile Ries (DE/PES) COR-2023-02188-00-01-AC-TRA

4 ECON-VII/027 - Single market emergency instrument - rapporteur: Muhterem Aras, (DE/The Greens) - COR-2022-04234-00-00-AC-TRA

5 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13287-2023-INIT/en/pdf>

(Regulation (EU) 2023/851) in which the co-legislators identified the ARA and the CoR as the key partner for the EC in addressing the shortcoming of their transition planning.

A new era of cooperation

A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the CoR and the European Parliament on Communication in the run-up and follow-up to European elections 2024, where the CoR has a key role to play from a democratic, policy and institutional point of view.

The CoR had several times requested access to the documents of the interinstitutional negotiations (“trilogues”). This to allow the CoR to fulfil its obligations under the Treaty and represent regional interest in the European legislative process. The pilot action to influence trilogues negotiations started in 2023, because the **Council gave the access to trilogue documents** as from this year. Therefore, the CoR can report from a successful follow up of the Fit for 55 package, to influence trilogues negotiations (on the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation and the Trans-European Transport Networks Guidelines). For the opinions *Towards zero emission road transport*⁶ and *Guidelines for the development of the trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)*⁷ the CoR has had also access to the documents of the interinstitutional negotiations (“trilogues”) and was able to present its views in this crucial stage of the legislative process.

The **Young Elected Politicians programme** (YEPs) is a network of representatives who are no older than 35 and hold a mandate at regional or local level in the EU. The YEP programme’s cohort involves 156 YEPs covering all EU

member states and, for the first time in 2023, all **EU candidate countries**, bringing the total amount of participants in the YEP programme since its establishment to 836.

A Letter of Intent was signed, in August 2023, with the **National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**, a US bipartisan organization that addresses the concerns of US subnational entities (States) towards the US Federal Government and US Congress, marking the beginning of a structured cooperation between the CoR and this transatlantic partner.

A more detailed account of achievements is provided in the Annual Impact Report 2023⁸.

2023 administrative achievements supporting political priorities

The mission of the Secretariat-General of the CoR is to assist the Committee and its Members in reaching their political objectives as well as to provide its day-to-day administration.

The year 2023 was the fourth year of the CoR’s seventh mandate, with three political priorities set. The “Going for IMPact!” plan, which the Secretary-General launched at the start of his mandate was continued in 2023. Its objective set by the Members and the CoR President is to modernize the administration. The plan includes a comprehensive set of measures to make the administration’s support to the CoR’s political mission more strategic, to use the CoR’s resources in a more efficient way and to boost the impact and outreach of the institution.

The aim of that programme is to refocus management on boosting the CoR’s impact and performance through the following clusters:



(I) Focused Policy support



(II) Increased Outreach



(III) Smart & modern administration

6 COTER-VII/015 - Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO2 emission performance standards - rapporteur: Adrian Teban (RO/EPP) - COR-2021-04913-00-00-AC-TRA.

7 COTER-VII/019 - Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) – rapporteur: Isabelle Boudineau (FR/PES) - COR-2022-01228-00-00-AC-TRA.

8 [Summary and full report](#).

Common features of the work related to the clusters from all parts of the administration are:

- The concentration of resources and administrative support to areas where the institution can achieve the most impactful added-value for the Union
- Strong focus on digitization
- Inclusive and cross-service cooperation increasing project oriented work focused on impact
- Review of processes in order to achieve efficiency gains in times of scarce resources
- Focus on outreach activities increasing inter-institutional impact and good communication with regional and local politicians and citizens
- The effective implementation of the EESC-CoR cooperation agreement, putting always first the interest of CoR members and their political activity.

In 2023, the Secretary-General organised two staff forums: the first on Cluster I (Focused Policy support) when staff members reported on the achieved actions and the second one on Interinstitutional job shadowing and job rotation. These seminars have seen a very high staff participation. They gave the opportunity to review in a participatory format the proposals made by staff and management back in 2020 and to look at what has been achieved in the modernisation of the administration over the last 4 years and on the other hand, listen to the staff's opinions on the new projects.

In the context of the "Going for IMPact!" plan, a thorough and inclusive analysis was made on the CoR's priorities in 2020, coupled with an exercise of administrative simplification of processes and procedures (cutting red-tape). Based on this work, 9 cross-service, non-hierarchical Task Forces were created for priority areas in July 2020.

The initial 9 Task Forces were reviewed and 5 continued to work in 2023 (3 political and 2 administrative):

1. Strategic planning
2. Simplification of administrative environment
3. The Green Deal Going Local
4. Conference on the Future of Europe (closed as the objectives have been achieved)
5. COVID-19 Action Plan (closed as the objectives have been achieved)
6. Financial Management (closed as the objectives have been achieved) and replaced by Task Force Ukraine
7. Electronic Workflows & XML (closed as the objectives have been achieved)
8. Digital Strategy (closed as the objectives have been achieved)
9. Better Regulation and the Fit4Future Platform

All the Task Forces' achievements have had a great impact on the modernization of the administration and on the CoR's Members and core activities in 2023.

In the following parts of this report, the main achievements and activities are compared against the objectives set in the Annual Operational Working Plan 2023, as well as the budget execution within the parameters of the control environment. The report also contains a declaration, signed by the Authorising Officer by Delegation, on the application of the principle of sound financial management to the use of the resources and on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions in 2023.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANNUAL OPERATIONAL WORKING PLAN PER CORE BUSINESS FUNCTION

This chapter presents the implementation of the Annual Operational Working Plan per service.

The table below shows the staff of the European Committee of the Regions as of 31 December 2023.

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	307	175	14	496
Contract staff ⁽¹⁾	32	41	0	73
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	42
Seconded national experts	10			10
Other personnel (specify) ⁽²⁾	1			1
Total	363	216	14	625

⁽¹⁾ contract staff replacing absent staff (e.g. maternity leave or short-term assignments) are not included.
⁽²⁾ medical doctor

2.1 Glossary of frequently used terms and icons



Political priority for 2023: Bringing Europe closer to its people: strengthening EU democracy and working together on the future of our Union.



Political priority for 2023: Understand and respond to the profound societal transformations that the digital, environmental and demographic challenges entail for building resilient regional and local communities.



Political priority for 2023: Ensure that the European Union is permanently at the service of its people and the places they live based on social, economic and territorial cohesion as fundamental values.



Administrative priority for 2023: Focused Policy support.



Administrative priority for 2023: Increased Outreach.



Administrative priority for 2023: Smart & modern administration.

AOD:	Authorising Officer by Delegation
ARLEM	Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly
ASPC:	Annual Strategic Planning Cycle
AV Facility:	Audio visual facility
CAP:	Common Agricultural Policy
CALRE:	Conference of the Regional Legislative Assemblies of the EU
CCC:	Conference of Committee Chairs
CCP:	Congé Convenance Personnel
CCT:	Convention Collective du Travail
CFAA:	Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs
CIVEX:	Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional Affairs and External Relations

CJEU:	European Union Court of Justice
COFE:	Conference on the Future of Europe
CoP:	Conference of the Presidents
COP28:	28 th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
COPA-COGECA:	United voice of farmers and agri-cooperatives in the EU
CoR:	Committee of the Regions
CORLEAP:	Conference for local and regional authorities for the Eastern Partnership
CPQS:	Preparatory Committee for Staff Regulations Matters
CSAR:	Supervisory Committee for Catering
D&I topics:	Diversity and Inclusion
DB:	Draft Budget
DPA:	Data Protection Agreement
DPN:	Data Protection Notice
DPO:	Data Protection Officer
EAC:	Direction General for Education and Culture
EC:	European Commission
ECON:	Commission for Economic Policy
EGTCs:	European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation
END:	Expert national détaché
ENVE:	Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy
EMAS:	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EP:	European Parliament
EPOCH:	European Platform on Combatting Homelessness
E-PRIOR:	IT tool to send invoices and credit notes
EPRS:	European Parliamentary Research Service
EPSO:	European Personnel Selection Office
EPSCO:	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
ESPAS:	European Strategy and Policy Analysis System
ESPO:	European Territorial Reference Framework
EUIs:	European Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies
JCA:	Joint Controllorship Arrangement (CoR and CESE)
JRC:	Joint Research Center IFOAM: Global network of organic actors and advocates, promoting organic agriculture and food systems
ICLEI:	Network of local and regional governments working to advance low emission, nature-based, equitable, resilient and circular urban development.
IEA:	Interoperable Europe Act
IMP:	Unit Imprimerie/Diffusion LRA: Local and Regional Authorities
ITRE:	Parliamentary committee that deals with EU policies on industry, research and energy
LRAs:	Local and Regional Authorities
MEP:	Member of the European Parliament
MFA:	Multifactor authentication

MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
AT:	Commission for Natural Resources
NEB:	New European Bauhaus
NWOW:	New ways of working
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSS:	One Stop Shop
PKI:	Public key infrastructure
PLAGE:	Plan Local d'Actions pour la Gestion Energétique
PPPAs:	European Parliament Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions
RegHub:	Network of Regional Hubs
RM:	Risk Management
ROPA:	Record of Processing Activity
RoP:	Rules of Procedure
RRF:	Recovery and Resilience Facility
RTD:	Directorate General for Research and Innovation
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDEC:	Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture
YEP:	Young Elected Politicians
SLA:	Service Level Agreement
TIA:	Territorial Impact Assessment
YEPS:	Young Elected Politicians
ZPSP:	Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform
UNIA:	Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism
UNDRR:	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

2.2 Secretariats of the Political Groups

The political groups maximised the participation and involvement while maintaining good attendance percentage of their members in commission meetings and other statutory and working bodies.

Political programmes were developed and adapted to the wider institutional and political developments and opinions on key topics for relevance of regions and municipalities were adopted. The Groups promoted the work of the CoR as a political assembly to other EU institutions, bodies, agencies, as well as partner associations and organisations. Inviting high profile speakers from all institutions led to developing new contacts and agreeing on policy proposals with a local and regional perspective.

Meetings and events with key contacts were organised together with EU Commissioners, MEPs, and other Institutional stakeholders and organisational partners. Joint activities across the wider political families were organ-

ised (Party and European Parliament sister Group). The level of dialogue was increased with specific stakeholders or new stakeholders joining the dialogues. These events addressed EU policy, governance issues and the political groups' respective agendas.

Targets were achieved for 2023 which included the publication of more content (articles, speeches, videos) on respective political priorities. In addition, Political Groups contributed to audiovisual products produced by the European Committee of the Regions by sharing engaging stories by members and assisting in devising impactful storylines. Finally, there was an increased activity and presence on social media, a higher engagement of users on the websites, as well as an increased visibility through an active presence on social media channels. In 2023, special focus was given to the 2024 European elections and the celebration of the CoR's 30th anniversary.

2.3 Service / Directorate per Core Business Function

OBJECTIVES OVERVIEW		
Objective	Led by	Page
CBF 1: Organise statutory meetings to prepare and adopt opinions, resolutions and reports on EU legislation, strategies and policies. Support to members and meeting logistics.		
Objective 1: Ensure efficient organizational, logistical, administrative and financial support to CoR members and bodies for accomplishing their political mission and activities at the CoR.	A and D	15
Objective 2: Contribute to the internal functioning of the CoR by providing efficient financial and administrative support and tools to CoR services.	A	16
Objective 3: Coordinate the cross-cutting strategic planning process for CoR's political and legislative work and develop CoR's inter-institutional relations at horizontal level.	A, B and C	17
CBF 2: Mainstream CoR opinions and recommendations in the decision-making at European, national, regional and local levels, and amplify its impact by increasing its visibility beyond the EU institutions.		
Objective 4: Provide Political recommendations for EU policies and programmes and collaborate in the design of EU policies.	B & C	18
Objective 5: Cooperate with the EU Institutions when deciding on EU programmes and policies.	B, C & D	19
Objective 6: Develop CoR's capacity and activities on foresight.	A, B & C	22
CBF 3: Organise platforms, networks, fora and partnerships with regions, cities, municipalities and their representative organisations.		
Objective 7: Promote EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions.	B, C & D	23
Objective 8: Improve outreach of CoR's consultative works through targeted communication (raise the CoR's institutional and political profile as the assembly of Europe's regions and cities and the role of its members, both in Brussels and at a local level).	D, B & C	25
CBF 4: Foster sub-national politicians' dialogue with the citizens on Europe's achievements and challenges and ensure contact with media.		
Objective 8: Improve outreach of CoR's consultative works through targeted communication (raise the CoR's institutional and political profile as the assembly of Europe's regions and cities and the role of its members, both in Brussels and at a local level).	D, B & C	25
Objective 9: Enhance visibility and impact of the assembly's and its members' political work via communication tools and channels on key priority areas.	D, B & C	26
CBF 5: Organise dialogue with regional and local authorities in candidate countries and neighbouring partner countries.		
Objective 10: Continued support to the enlargement process from the subnational angle (now also for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia).	B & C	27
Objective 11: European Neighbourhood: Strengthen ties with LRAs from Eastern partnership countries and Mediterranean partner countries.	B	28
Objective 12: Support development cooperation at a local / regional angle.	B	29
CBF 6: Provide and further develop key administrative support areas: HR, Financial management, ICT environment, Translation, Infrastructure, Legal Service.		
Objective 13: Support and follow-up on CFAA meetings, coordinate the management planning and reporting cycle and carry out other horizontal administrative functions in an efficient and transparent way.	E	29

Objective 14: Ensure appropriate budget allocation, uphold sound and regular management of financial resources and monitor a cost-effective internal control environment in the institution.	E	32
Objective 15: Optimise the use of human resources on the basis of the institution's talent management strategy and further develop human resources policies adapted to the institution's priorities.	E	34
Objective 16: Provide AOD with opinion and related recommendations on adequacy of Risk Management, control and governance processes in the framework of his declarations for for 2023 and for the preparation of the 2024 declaration, with references to the areas already audited.	IAS	36
Objective 17: Provide independent legal advice to the Committee's members, bodies and departments.	LS	37
Objective 18: Contribute to the development and improvement of the Committee's internal legal framework.	LS	38
Objective 19: Represent the Committee's interests in the context of (extra)judicial proceedings.	LS	39
Objective 20: Implementing the building strategy.	L	40
Objective 21: Reorganisation of the IMP unit - project Horizont 2025.	L	41
Objective 22: Preparing the future of catering.	L	42
Objective 23: Contribute to the implementation of the CoR Digital vision. Provide information systems, IT infrastructure and user support services, according to the best practice of IT management while optimising the use of human and financial resources.	IIT	43
Objective 24: To further deepen and develop the sustainable multilingualism policy for both Committees, in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement.	T	44
Objective 25: To consolidate relations with DT internal (legislative work) and external (interinstitutional cooperation in translation) stakeholders.	T	45

2.4 Service / Directorate per Core Business Function

CBF 1. Organise statutory meetings to prepare and adopt opinions, resolutions and reports on EU legislation, strategies and policies. Support to members and meeting logistics.

OBJECTIVE 1. Ensure efficient organizational, logistical, administrative and financial support to CoR members and bodies for accomplishing their political mission and activities at the CoR.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Installation of a new interpretation system in the conference room VMA21	Achieved	Partially achieved	30 %
Increase the number of visits on the OSS website	50% increase of number of visits	N/A ⁹	0 %
Update and consolidate the existing legal framework applicable to the organisation of CoR activities and the reimbursement of expenses and payment of allowances to certain categories of participants in those activities	New legal framework adopted by the Bureau	Partially Achieved ¹⁰	50 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, more than 13,000 **financial transactions** related to CoR members were managed. Logistic services were provided for over 3,676 meetings, 390 of which with interpretation services, and protocolary assistance was facilitated to 291 VIP delegations visiting CoR representatives or attending CoR high-level events.

An ad hoc commission set up in 2023 reviewed the CoR's Rules of Procedure (RoP). Its proposals for phase 1 of the revision were adopted by the Plenary in July 2023. The Plenary decided to extend the mandate of the ad hoc commission.

Business support was provided to the implementation of phase 1 of the Rules of Procedure (changes to chapters 5 and 6) in the Members' Portal. Moreover, the entire **amendments' process is now fully digital**, as the imple-

mentation of the submission of Rapporteur's amendments via the Members' Portal including when working «On-Behalf-Of» was finalised.

In 2023, the work of the political representative of the CoR was prepared and supported in the ongoing negotiations for establishing an interinstitutional body for ethical standards for the members of the EU Institutions. Moreover, a series of transparency measures for CoR members' interaction with interest representatives under the provisions of the **«EU Transparency Register»** were successfully introduced.

The simplification and consolidation exercise for the internal rules governing the organization of CoR activities and the related reimbursement of expenses and payment of allowances continued in 2023¹¹; it aims to be finalised in 2024.

⁹ Work to relocate OSS information from the intranet to the CoR website was finalised from a technical perspective. The content of the new pages is in the process of being updated.

¹⁰ It is partially completed because there was only a partial update of the legal framework regarding the organisation of CoR activities: the revision of the CoR Rules of Procedure in 2023 provided a new legal framework for the holding of CoR meetings by allowing both exceptional digital participation of a rapporteur and the possibility of organising non-statutory meetings in a hybrid or remote form based on budgetary, environmental or organisational reasons. The works on the pending update and consolidation are ongoing.

¹¹ The working group prepared a written consultation of CFAA members and submitted the assessment of results at the CFAA meeting of November 2023.

The development work for the **relocation of OSS information** from the intranet to the CoR website aimed at facilitating access to CoR members to relevant information was finalised. However, the content is being reshaped towards the next term-of-office and the new members.

As part of the CoR efforts towards **EU's goal of climate neutrality** full remote interpretation not only for internal meetings, but also for the plenary sessions and the external meetings of the Bureau and of CoR commissions was organised for the first time in the history of the EU Institutions. This entailed a number of challenges, which were successfully addressed.

In 2023, the CoR also launched the call for tenders for in-presence interpretation together with the Council.

The renovation of meeting room VMA21 started in December 2023, in accordance with the Multiannual Plan 2022-2027 signed with the EESC in November 2022. Also, efforts

for deepening our relations with the European Parliament's services have paid off, resulting in more CoR Plenary Sessions being organised in the Hemicycle in 2023.

In 2023, the final phases of the preparations for the first **transmission of the CoR historical archives** to the Historical Archives of the European Union were reached, including the physical and digital transfer of fonds with a 30-year history (1994 and 1995), to take place in the course of 2024.

The CoR has enhanced the **knowledge-based political action** by pro-actively providing access for members and CoR services to intelligence platforms and other sources of information. Thus, throughout 2023, tailored digital subscriptions to newspapers and intelligence platforms were provided to staff and members through e.g. the «Good-Read» catalogue. The CoR executed 255 transport missions and accomplished the renewal of the entire official vehicles fleet, with the acquisition of three electric vehicles.

OBJECTIVE 2. Contribute to the internal functioning of the CoR by providing efficient logistical, financial and administrative support and tools to CoR services.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Central meeting service fully operational	Achieved	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

As regards the CoR's initiatives to improve logistic, financial and administrative support to services involved in the organization of members' political activities, the new **«Central meeting service»** has become fully operational in 2023, extending its activities also to the external meetings of the CoR commissions.

The development of an integrated electronic workflow related to special authorisations for members' participation in meetings was completed in 2023, with the new workflow running since January 2024.

Moreover, the ad hoc commission for the revision of the CoR Rules of Procedure is working on the possible inclusion of a legal basis for enabling electronic registration of participations (attendance lists) in the future. The outcome of the ad hoc commission's work will be known in the course of 2024.

Regarding the development of an **electronic financial monitoring** tool for the budget lines related to political activities, the incompatibility of the different IT tools used for the payments on the budget lines related to political activities prevented the reasonable development of a ded-

icated electronic monitoring tool as it was initially desired. However, an alternative development in Phoenix was introduced in early 2023, facilitating a closer follow-up of expenses and an improved budget planning/monitoring.

A new contract with the travel management company for members' and staff's travels for the period 2024-2028 was signed in 2023, following an interinstitutional tender procedure.

In 2023, the Committee managed 549 **visitor groups** with a total of 15,801 visitors reaching the pre-pandemic level (an increase of 18,5% for the groups, and of 6,6% for the visitors compared to 2022). More CoR members were involved as speakers for visitor groups than in previous years (27 in total, compared to 14 in 2022 and 8 in 2021). The most represented category of visitors were groups of university students (141 groups, with 4,649 participants), making it the main category of visitors, followed by the groups of elected officials (116 groups amounting to 2,779 participants).

1,429 letters were processed by the CoR's Protocol service.

OBJECTIVE 3. Coordinate the cross-cutting strategic planning process for CoR's political and legislative work and develop CoR's inter-institutional relations at horizontal level.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Milestones of the ASPC implemented	Achieved	Achieved	100 %
Negotiations for the review of the cooperation agreements with EP and EC opened, with agreed roadmap for conclusion.	Achieved	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

As part of the **strategic planning** of CoR political activities, the implementation of the Annual Strategic Planning Cycle (ASPC) milestones was ensured. This includes the adoption of the annual Strategic guidelines by the Conference of Presidents (CoP) in November 2023, the annual meeting between the CoP and the CoR commission chairs and the annual debate on the state of play of the implementation of the CoR priorities for 2020-2025.

Under the guidance of the CoP, key processes were prepared and coordinated. This includes the negotiations on the review of the **cooperation agreements with the European Parliament and the European Commission** and the implementation of the CoR roadmap towards the EP elections, adopted by the CoP in May 2023. The negotiations with the EC, based on the mandate from the Bureau, took place between July and December 2023, and were successfully concluded, with the signature of the agreement in March 2024. The negotiations with the EP were launched in October 2023, based on the mandate given by the CoR Bureau in March 2023, and were successfully concluded, with the signature of the agreement foreseen in May 2024. A dedicated «Memorandum of Understanding on joint communication activities with EP» (in view of the

upcoming EU elections) was concluded in October 2023 and signed in February 2024.

In 2023, **nine meetings of the Conference of Presidents** were successfully organised, out of which three away from Brussels, in Ukraine (extraordinary CoP), Sweden and Spain. These meetings are getting more and more dynamic thanks to the further opening to external speakers (with 11 speakers external to the CoR).

CoR continued its **cooperation with European associations of local and regional authorities**. Two meetings were organised at the level of the secretary-generals to ensure synergies with respect to priorities of mutual interest. The annual project with the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies «Input from debates in regional parliaments» was pursued in 2023, focusing on the new EU policy cycle 2024-2029.

With respect to **inter-institutional relations**, the work of the CoR with the Council presidencies was streamlined, ensuring a more forward-looking planning, including the planning of referrals. The internal reflection on trilogues and the cooperation with the EP at horizontal level was further developed by organizing the annual joint seminar with EPRS.

CBF 2. Mainstream CoR opinions and recommendations in the decision-making at European, national, regional and local levels, and amplify its impact by increasing its visibility beyond the EU institutions.

OBJECTIVE 4. Provide Political recommendations for EU policies and programmes and collaborate in the design of EU policies.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Total number of CoR opinions (legislative; non legislative) and Resolutions	55 opinions and resolutions	59 opinions and resolutions in 2023	100 %
Number of CoR Opinions and resolutions with a specific reference to subsidiarity	25 opinions and resolutions	33 opinions and resolutions	100 %
Number of references to results of networks/platforms and Better Regulation Instruments in CoR opinions/resolutions	40 references	46 references (including subsidiarity references)	100 %
Number of Studies published.	20 studies published	19 studies published	95 %
Number of EPRS consultations.	15 EPRS consultations	33 EPRS consultations	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, the CoR continued contributing with a **subsidiarity monitoring** system throughout the whole EU policy and law-making process by achieving its ambitious target.

The CoR was very active in terms of adoption of its political positions being it through opinions or through resolutions. Thanks to the overall effort, supported by studies commissioned, EPRS expertise, and reports from the Better regulation tools such as TIA or RegHub and other activities, the CoR had great achievements from a qualitative perspective, among which:

- The own-initiative opinion on **the future of Cohesion Policy** post-2027 allowed the CoR, as the first institution working on the matter, to assume a proactive and leading role on the future of cohesion policy; the Council conclusions on the future of cohesion policy adopted by the General Affairs Council on 30 November took on board many aspects that were put forward in the CoR opinion;
- Through its **Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA)**, the CoR underlined the need for policy and budgetary measures for a just transition; the ARA and the CoR were referred explicitly to in Regulation (EU) 2023/851 as key partners in ensuring a successful just and sustainable transition;
- The efforts of the CoR delegation, coupled with the CoR opinion [UNFCCC COP28: the role of subnational authorities in keeping climate ambition on track](#) played a pivotal role in securing the formal recognition of the role of cities and regions in the [Council conclusions on COP28](#) and in the [European Parliament Resolution for COP28](#);
- The endorsement of the CoR coordinated the first ever [common position of cities and regions across the globe ahead of COP28](#) by more than 65 networks and the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency, served as a powerful tool to amplify and disseminate it globally and secured robust references to multilevel action in the COP28 decision documents;
- The CoR opinion on the **Critical raw materials** package had a strong influence on the European Parliament's position, including in the trilogue process;
- Following the CoR opinions on **"Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO2 emission performance standards"** and **"Guidelines for the**

development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)"; the CoR received access to the documents of the interinstitutional negotiations ("trilogues") and was able to present its views at this crucial stage of the legislative process;

- The European Parliament reflected several legislative amendments and recommendations from the CoR's opinion in its report on the establishment of the **Ukraine Facility**;
- The European Parliament highlighted the CoR's guiding principles in its Resolution on the **sustainable reconstruction and integration of Ukraine** into the Euro-Atlantic community;
- The importance of the CoR's input into the report on a long-term vision for the **EU's rural areas** was publicly acknowledged at the High-Level Policy Forum under the Spanish Presidency of the Council;
- The CoR also contributed to the implementation of the Long-term vision for rural areas through two studies on the cost of non-rurality and on rural areas and the geography of discontent;
- The European Parliament's report on the **Single Market Emergency Instrument** adopted amendments from the CoR's opinion, with a specific reference to these amendments as coming from the CoR;
- The European Commission launched the joint **Horizon Europe** and Interregional Innovation Investments call for Regional Innovation Valleys, responding to the CoR's appeal for better synergies between the regional policy funds and the Horizon programme in support of regional innovation;
- The European Parliament's **New European Bauhaus** (NEB) Pilot Project for a voucher scheme was an EU action initiated by the CoR. This project will be implemented by the Joint Research Centre in partnership with the CoR;
- Explicit reference was made to the CoR's work in the first EU Voluntary Review of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) drafted by the European Commission;
- Addressing main concerns of the leading **European tourism** destinations, the CoR has successfully influenced the Council and the Parliament to empower EU cities and regions through access to timely and accurate data. Through its legislative amendments and awareness raising, the CoR has achieved significant impact in the final text of the draft regulation on short-term rentals, securing access to data from the online platforms and gaining more control;
- The opinion on **risk management and market regulation**: the tools to strengthen the sustainability of European agriculture points out the necessity to respond in a timely and suitable manner to the needs of EU farmers and regions as well as additional financial resources to those already in place, in the event of exceptional climate situations;
- The CoR's strongly engaged in high-level discussions on skills policies during the **European Year of Skills** reinforced its position as a key stakeholder in this policy area.

OBJECTIVE 5. Cooperate with the EU Institutions when deciding on EU programmes and policies.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of Follow-up of opinions meetings organised	45 follow-ups	76 follow-ups	100 %
Number of Actions Plans with European Commission Services	7 action plans	6 action plans	86 %
Number of the high-level representatives of EU institutions in CoR statutory meetings	75 high-level representatives	78 high-level representatives	100 %
Number of CoR members participating in EP/Council meetings and events	75 members participating	78 members participating	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, building on already existing **strong interinstitutional cooperation**, the CoR has strengthened further the follow-up of opinions processes and reinforced its participation in debates with high level representatives from EU institutions which is showcased by an important increase in the number of related activities.

In October 2023, the CoR published the fourth edition of the **EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities**. This report represents a snapshot of the most pressing challenges faced by regions and cities across the Union. Based on original studies commissioned by the European Committee of the Regions, as well as academic research, contributions from other European institutions and open-source documentation, this report provides facts and data for policy-makers and relevant stakeholders.

Its main findings and recommendations have been echoed in the annual address on the **State of Regions and Cities in the European Union**, delivered by the President of the European Committee of the Regions, Vasco Alves Cordeiro on the 9th October 2023. In line with the geopolitical context, the 2023 edition of the Report focused on the economic and social consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine. It shows how regions and cities contribute to the long-term transformation of our societies, with the green and digital transition, while strengthening cohesion.

Territorial Impact Assessments (TIA) provide an ex-ante assessment of potential differentiated territorial impacts of all new EU policies with a territorial dimension in their design phase. In 2023, the CoR secured future ESPON support on Territorial Impact Assessment in the context of the new ESPON 2030 program. For example, the CoR actively co-shaped the Rural Pact Coordination Group, who chose one of the CoR representatives as its chair. The CoR methodology on rural proofing was put into action together by the CoR COTER commission and ESPON. A first TIA workshop with a rural focus was organized on 22 June 2023 on sustainable food systems.

Building up cooperation with the European Commission

The European Committee of the Regions continues co-organising and co-chairing with the European Commission the **Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform** that was launched in 2021. This is an important recognition of the role of local and regional authorities in this sector. On one hand local and regional authorities often have an important role in implementing policies to fight pollution on the ground, on the other hand, they are in the first line to see the practical effects on our communities of insufficient policies to fight pollution.

In 2023, the Platform launched the new online «**Zero Pollution Talks**» with significant CoR participation in particular for the one on Foresight and the one on Soil linked with the CoR opinion. CoR members (and a YEP) participated to talks, workshops and plenary meetings with many topics important for the local and regional dimension, in par-

ticular the April meeting included a discussion on «**Zero Pollution/Green Deal in cities**». CoR ENVE commission worked to involve other units in the ZPSP activities, especially SEDEC that is responsible for some files included significantly in 2023.

The members of the **CoR's Green Deal Going Local Working Group**, as part of the above-mentioned strategic foresight exercise- that was supported by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) - have used an innovative approach consisting of the [Scenario Exploration System](#) methodology developed by the JRC to respond to two contrasting future scenarios, through a role play. The results of the exercise will be analysed and communicated to the European Commission, which has integrated [strategic foresight](#) as a key element of its work to strengthen evidence-based and anticipatory policymaking. The results of the exercises are also contributing to the CoR reflection on the successful implementation of the European Green Deal and in shaping its future orientations (Green Deal 2.0).

The second edition of the **EU organic awards** was jointly organised by the European Commission, the [European Economic and Social Committee](#), the [European Committee of the Region](#), [COPA-COGECA](#) and [IFOAM Organics Europe](#). The winners of each category were announced on 25 September, during a special ceremony with EU commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz Wojciechowski. This joint initiative is essential to reward excellence in the organic food chain and stimulate both production and consumption of organic products.

The **RegHub 2.0** Network, managed by the ECON commission, reinforced its involvement in the European Commission's **Fit for Future Platform** and continued to carry out stakeholder consultations through its contact points for the opinions of the Fit for Future Platform drafted by CoR members as rapporteurs.

In the areas of **Research and Innovation**, 2023 was the third year of implementation for the Joint Action Plan with Commissioner Gabriel's services (DG RTD, JRC and DG EAC), allowing the CoR to be an active and recognised partner in the strategic debates and to give new impetus to the collaboration between the CoR and the European Commission. Dedicated events – both high-level political and technical – have been organised in cooperation with the European Commission and with participation at Commissioner level, notably on the implementation of the New European Innovation Agenda.

In 2023, members of the CoR actively engaged in over 50 events associated with the **European Year of Skills (EYS)**, showcasing the CoR's significant influence on skills policy. Their involvement not only elevated the importance of skill development at a regional and local level but also facilitated the exchange of ideas and best practices among institutions and stakeholders. The President of the CoR participated in the Porto Social Forum, an event organised by the Portuguese Government to mark the second year of the Porto Social Summit and take stock of progress regarding the Porto Declaration. Likewise, CoR member Emil Boc participated in the exchange of views with Commissioner Ferreira on «**Harnessing talent in Europe's regions**» held by

the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) in March 2023. The CoR also played a prominent role at the European Employment and Social Rights Forum in November 2023, the most important conference organised by the Commission on social policies and skills. These participations underlined the CoR's important role in shaping and driving skills policies that are responsive to the unique needs of regions and localities across Europe.

The conference held on 19 September 2023 in Timișoara on Implementing the proposals of the **Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE)**: strengthening European citizenship through promoting European identity and democratic values focused on how the EU makes a difference in their everyday lives and how our shared values are protected. Strengthening European democracy and dialogue with citizens on EU topics therefore becomes a shared responsibility of politicians at all levels, while cities and regions are well placed to implement various actions aimed at increasing trust in democratic processes and institutions as a means to strengthening democratic resilience. Local and regional authorities are well placed for empowering their citizens and notably young people to understand the importance of European values and European democracy.

The CoR, and the regions and cities it represents, are leading on many initiatives in all policy areas, which deliver on the objectives of the COFE. The COFE has strengthened the application of the principle of subsidiarity, primarily by acknowledging that active subsidiarity and multilevel governance are fundamental for the functioning of the EU and its democratic accountability. It confirms that regional and local authorities are the pillars of governance closest to the citizens, acting as intermediaries between the EU institutions and the people they serve.

Strengthening cooperation with the EU Parliament

A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the CoR and the European Parliament on communication in the run-up and follow-up to the **2024 European elections**, where the CoR has a key role to play from a democratic, policy and institutional point of view.

On 5 July 2023, an event organized jointly by the NAT and ENVE commissions of the CoR, and the Intergroup on Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside of the European Parliament discussed proposals and exchange best practices for improving the coexistence of **livestock farming and large carnivores** in Europe, on which the CoR has decided to draft an opinion to be adopted in April 2024.

The **future of cohesion policy** was at the centre of the debate at the joint REGI-COTER meeting in October 2023.

The CoR also participated for the first time in the European Parliament's **Gender Equality Week** (23-26 October 2023).

A hearing on the **territorial implementation of the CAP** was co-organised with the AGRI committee of the European Parliament and the coalition of European AGRIREGIONS on 25 October 2023. It was the occasion to have an exchange on the presentation of the result of the consultation on the regional dimension of the CAP National

Strategic Plans that the CoR has run among its Regional Hubs. Examples of regional intervention to demonstrate the added value of designing CAP interventions at regional level were presented.

In the process of drafting the opinion on **Boosting lasting and effective cross-border cooperation with our neighbours**, the CoR rapporteur Maupertuis worked closely with MEP Daniel Buda on his Report "*on the current and future challenges regarding cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries*" and presented her opinion on the same topic at the EP REGI Committee meeting. Consequently, the CoR rapporteur actively contributed the REGI Committee work, proposing concrete compromise amendments with MEP Buda, and in this way directly influencing the content of the Report.

The CoR, by close cooperation with EP and JRC, has solidified its position as the advocate for local and regional interests in the **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** at EU level and the institution has been acknowledged as a key partner in the successful implementation of the NEB. The CoR's NEB voucher idea was presented to Marcos Ros Sempere MEP, who expressed an interest in implementing this idea via European Parliament Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs) "*Stimulating local and regional New European Bauhaus grassroots projects*". In this area of work, the CoR organised several events (workshops, bilateral meetings, publication of study) in 2023 and has been invited by Commissioner Elisa Ferreira to participate in a high-level panel discussion on the "*New European Bauhaus in regions and cities*" ahead of the NEB prize ceremony in June 2023, to provide insights about the NEB initiative at local and regional level.

The CoR has also established good contacts with the respective rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs in the European Parliament ITRE committee and conducted a dedicated stakeholder's consultation to bring in input from relevant stakeholders on **Interoperable Europe Act (IEA)**. These good contacts allowed the ITRE committee to insert five CoR amendments into its report on IEA, taking up exact wording from the CoR Opinion. Furthermore, the Council, in its position for trilogue negotiations, put forward a number of amendments to the original text also inspired by the CoR opinion.

Also, in 2023, by establishing close relation with European Parliament rapporteur's team and the Council secretariat, the CoR opinion on **Critical Raw Materials Package** influenced on the European Parliament position for trilogues and follow up into trilogues.

Fostering cooperation with EU Council and Trio Presidency

The CoR, responding to a Commission proposal for a Council Recommendation, adopted a **Resolution on the initiative for strengthening social dialogue** at its March plenary session, which fed into the eventual recommendation adopted by EU ministers during the EPSCO meeting of the Swedish Presidency on 12 June 2023. The Spanish EU Presidency invited the SEDEC vice-chair Ricardo Rio (PT/EPP)

to present the CoR's positions and views on the topic at its informal EPSCO meeting in Madrid on 13-14 July 2023.

The CoR President and the COTER chair as co-rapporteurs for the opinion on the **Future of Cohesion policy** assumed a prominent role and put forward the views of the CoR at a number of high-level events, including the informal meeting of ministers responsible for cohesion policy on 29 September 2023 in Murcia (Spain).

Rural development was the central topic of the external CoR Bureau under the Spanish Council presidency.

Based on its opinions and resolution on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, its partnership with the OECD and its long-time collaboration with associations of local and regional authorities (Eurocities, CEMR, Regions4) and individual regions, the CoR organised several events with the European Commission Secretariat General coordinating the drafting of the EU Voluntary Review. The CoR also carried out a survey with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network which provided new data for the EU Voluntary Review. The Voluntary Review was presented jointly with the EC, Council, CoR and EESC at the United Nations in July 2023. The CoR also worked closely with the Spanish Presidency in this area and was regularly invited to speak at the Council Working Party. As a consequence, the Council Conclusions took on board the CoR's line on the European Semester and also gave prominent recognition to the role of the CoR as a key driver in boosting SDGs localization.

In the **Social policy area**, the CoR rapporteurs worked closely with the MEPs on several files. The CoR was repre-

sented on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness (EPOCH) by its member and rapporteur on homelessness Mikko Aaltonen, who participated in all EPOCH related events. This CoR member also participated in an EESC event at the EP, which was also attended by the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, as well as EPOCH president Yves Leterme. The CoR strengthened its cooperation with the OECD on this topic, and the rapporteur was invited to the OECD high-level conference in Paris, as well as representing the CoR at the Swedish Council Presidency conference on social economy.

Engaging local communities in the EU and beyond

The CoR covered events involving CoR staff and external staff from the EU, Ukraine, New York and Dubai. The External Bureau meetings in Kiruna and Logroño, as well as meetings in Kyiv and Lviv, have demonstrated the ability of the CoR and its members to engage with local communities in the EU and beyond.

As an example, the EURegionsWeek workshop of the CoR titled *"Bridging the Gap in Cross-Border Cooperation: Societal Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction"* was co-organised with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the CoR NAT commission as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities. Mr. Christophe Clergeau, MEP and former CoR rapporteur of the opinion on *"Preparing for and dealing with crises: strengthening the resilience of the Union, its regions and cities"* provided valuable insights. Other speakers included Małgorzata Bartyna-Zielińska, Head of the Environment and Climate Department, Wrocław, Poland and Sigrid Sengers, Mayor of Druten, the Netherlands.

OBJECTIVE 6. Develop CoR's capacity and activities on foresight.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Milestones of the foresight roadmap implemented	Achieved	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, the Committee continued to implement the roadmap concerning **strategic foresight**, organizing training and awareness activities¹², identifying new foresight stakeholders and ensuring CoR's regular participation and contribution to ESPAS activities.

The first-ever strategic foresight session for members of the CoR was organized for the Board members and the National Ambassadors of the European Covenant of Mayors. Moreover, support was provided for the CoR opinion on strategic foresight, which was adopted in October 2023.

¹² "Participatory lab on foresight" co-organized with EC at EURegionsWeek 2023.

CBF 3. Organise platforms, networks, fora and partnerships with regions, cities, municipalities and their representative organisations.

OBJECTIVE 7. Promote EU policies and programmes at local and regional level and Act as Ambassador of Europe in the municipalities, cities and regions.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of events of CoR networks and platforms.	30 events	52 events	100 %
Number of participants in the external events of the CoR Commissions	450 participants	1,135 participants	100 %
Number of Green Deal going local best practices collected by the CoR	350 best practices	300 best practices	86 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

As every year, each thematic commission of the CoR organised an external commission meeting next to a conference, as well as an external seminar with the aim to reach out to local and regional representatives and citizens as well as to **promote EU policies directly on the ground**. In that respect, as figures show, participation of citizens and locally based fora has significantly increased giving a greater outreach of our work.

Also, a great outreach to **local citizens and fora** at the occasion of the CoR external Bureau meetings in Kiruna (Sweden) and Logroño (Spain) should be highlighted.

Strengthening EU citizenship through education and culture at local and regional level

The CoR pilot project on **“Promoting EU values through education and culture”**, with over 120 examples and contributions, represents a concrete step towards creating a community of best practices at local and regional level and striving for common tools that can contribute to the EU’s goal of strengthening active European citizenship through education. Building societal resilience coupled with a stronger sense of EU citizenship needs to be part of a comprehensive strategy which starts at an early age and is pursued equally in both urban and rural areas, thus, meaningfully supporting citizens’ well-informed decision-making. It remains similarly important to ensure support for trustworthy and pluralistic local and regional media.

Our rich and diverse cultural heritage is an important component of European citizenship and of European iden-

tity, as it is also clearly stated in several COFE proposals. The challenge for the European Union, in this context, is to inspire belonging and ownership based on diversity, keeping together the local, national and European dimensions. Finally, a crucial angle to consider when it comes to **strengthening EU citizenship** through European values and identity, is the involvement of young people.

Green Deal Going Local

The **Green Deal Going Local** working group held three meetings, including a foresight exercise on the Green Deal Going Local on 15 November 2023. Relevant topics of discussion were bridging the financing gap to move from plans to investments, public-private partnerships in support of green deal projects implementation, the governance of the European Green Deal (multilevel governance for climate action and environmental protection, multilevel governance for sustainable and just food systems transformation and multilevel economic governance for the green transition), and the future of the European Green Deal, also in view of the European elections in 2024.

The CoR First Vice-President and the ENVE Chair represented the CoR in two key high-level COP28 events: the first [Local Climate Action Summit](#), where more than 500 LRAs took centre stage in the COP official programme and where. In addition, more than 70 nations endorsed [the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships](#) and the World Climate Action Summit.

The **Green Deal Going Local handbook** is a tool for assisting LRAs in implementing Green Deal policies and accessing financial assistance. A new edition of the handbook

on the renovation wave was developed in July 2023. The handbook webpage is one of the most successful campaign pages. There are currently over 300 best practices on the page, submitted by 150 members. A content calendar was developed to promote them on social media, and 17 Green Deal stories were shared across CoR platforms (a total of 66 posts). A targeted advertising campaign generated around 100,000 engagements and over 13,000 link clicks to the Green Deal best practice webpage.

Promoting other relevant EU policies and programmes at local and regional level

For the first time, more than 800 representatives from local action groups across Europe met on 18-19 December at the [2023 LEADER European Congress](#), hosted by the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and social Committee (EESC) to discuss the role of **rural development** in shaping Europe's future. The conference, which was held six months before elections to the European Parliament, provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas and experiences, address the challenges faced by rural areas, and advocate for a stronger focus on rural development in EU policy.

The CoR together with the Ministry of European Investments and Projects of Romania organised a high-level conference, at the occasion of the external COTER commission meeting, on **“Cohesion, our fundamental value for the future of Europe: regions and cities for a Strong Recovery and a Just Transition”** on 22 June 2023 in Sibiu (Romania), which brought together ministers and high-level representatives of 23 Member States, the European Commission and COTER members for an unprecedented exchange on the impact of cohesion policy and investments.

Thanks to the work of the **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Platform and the European Cross-Border Citizens' Alliance**, and following several CoR opinions and a resolution over the past five years, in 2023, the CoR successfully relaunched the debate at the EU level on the European Cross-Border Mechanism Regulation at its spring conference on *«Living in Border Regions – Tackling the challenges»*, increasing Member States' understanding of the difficulties that cross-border obstacles pose to many citizens and businesses in the European Union.

The **Automotive Regions Alliance** of the European Committee of the Regions was officially launched at the CoR Plenary in June 2022 and since then has been recognised by the European Commission as a key partner for the **regional dimension of the transformation** (e.g. in the

“transition pathway of the mobility eco-system” and in the *“Route35”* Platform established by Commissioner Thierry Breton). Since its creation with 21 member regions, by the end of 2023, the membership of the Alliance has grown to 36 regions.

At the invitation of Mr. Aaltonen, a conference was held in his home town of Tampere as part of the SEDEC external meeting and conference, entitled **“Homelessness: Prevention measures, European support and the Finnish experience”**. This conference mobilised more than a hundred of local participants giving the opportunity to exchange on local experiences and needs from EU level with local and regional representatives and academicians.

A conference was held on 2 June 2023 in Toruń, Poland to discuss the major challenges currently faced by regions and cities in the context of the food crisis and climate change. It focused on the impact of **climate change on food systems** and how to build regional strategies for food security. It dealt with citizens' engagement in the quest for sustainable solutions at EU, national, regional and local level. Solutions available to farmers and to decision-makers to mitigate the impact of warm-up and dry conditions and to ensure our food security at EU level and beyond were reviewed. Finally, it analysed how regional food security strategies contribute to building a more resilient and sustainable food system.

CoR ECON commissions had also organized its external commission conference **“Strengthening Digital Resilience – A precondition for successful digital transformation in EU Regions”** in Wismar (Germany) which involved in very interesting discussions between the CoR members, local fora and several high-level representatives from different member states and localities, including two Ministers of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region.

In October 2023, during EU Regions Week, a workshop on [Promoting social innovation through public canteens](#) was co-organised with ICLEI, IFOAM organics Europe and the CoR NAT commission. The CoR rapporteur Joke Schauvliege opened the session, while a petition for healthy school meals and food education was handed over to the MEPs, Manuela Ripa and Michaela Šojdrová.

The **European Year of Skills (EYS)**: one of the key communication campaign assets, together with the **EU Green Deal** and the **resilience of regions and cities**. There were 4,747 media mentions related to the campaign (36% of the total), 26 videos with a total of 749,706 views, and 5,414 social media mentions. Most engagements were linked to COP28, the highlight of this year's campaign.

OBJECTIVE 8. Improve outreach of CoR's consultative works through targeted communication (raise the CoR's institutional and political profile as the assembly of Europe's regions and cities and the role of its members, both in Brussels and at a local level).

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of Young Elected Politicians (YEPs) and YEP alumni	450 YEP politicians and alumni	836 YEP politicians and alumni	100 %
Number of EU Councillors enrolled in the CoR Network.	4,000 EU Councillors	3,000 EU Councillors	75 %
Number of politicians participating in the Summits of Regions and Cities.	2,000 politicians	11,418 politicians	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

The 21st edition of the **European Week of Regions and Cities** confirmed itself as the largest EU inter-institutional event dedicated to cohesion themes across the EU, with 8,418 registered participants on site and over 3,000 online, including some 600 elected representatives, 244 sessions and 210 workshops.

Over 35,000 participants attended **228 events organised/hosted** or supported by the CoR. This includes over 100 own and co-organised events, 93 local dialogues (including #EURegionsweek side events) and 33 hosted events. #EURegionsweek registered a record attendance (over 8,000 participants). These events included over 650 individual participations by CoR Members.

The 2023 **Young elected politicians (YEP)** programme's cohort involves 156 YEPs covering all EU member states and, for the first time, all EU candidate countries in a fully gender-balanced way, bringing the total amount of participants in the YEP programme since its establishment to 836. YEPs impact included direct contributions to the CoR activities through consultations with CoR Commissions as well as participation in Commission meetings. CoR activities were communicated to the YEPs through events, newsletter, social media, videos as well as through a dedicated

platform and through community management. Their participation in the EU Regions Week and the work done for the Charter on Youth and Democracy were key highlights of this programme and contributed to maximise the visibility of the CoR, thus increasing the reach-out to the over 1 million regional and local representatives across the EU.

The **Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors** has reached 3,000 participants and gathered local and regional politicians from all 27 EU Member States. It is generating relevant impact by bringing Europe closer to local communities and encouraging local and regional councillors to organise EU and CoR related activities within their regions, cities and villages. The network is proving a successful tool to trigger local politicians' interest and proves that local representatives are keen to learn more about EU actions and policies and to bring this knowledge to their communities. It is also a key tool to cooperate with the European Parliament in view of the next EU elections. Efforts are already ongoing to build on its success and make sure that the network continues to grow also in the years to come, also by offering new products, services and networking initiatives, in coordination with the parallel project "Building Europe with Local Councillors" run by the European Commission.

CBF 4. Foster sub-national politicians' dialogue with the citizens on Europe's achievements and challenges and ensure contact with media.

OBJECTIVE 8. Improve outreach of CoR's consultative works through targeted communication (raise the CoR's institutional and political profile as the assembly of Europe's regions and cities and the role of its members, both in Brussels and at a local level).

(See above, p 25)

OBJECTIVE 9. Enhance visibility and impact of the assembly's and its members' political work via communication tools and channels on key priority areas.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Media outreach Digital engagement- Media mentions	to increase up to 5% the media mentions	13,210 media mentions. ¹³	100 %
Media outreach Digital engagement- Web visitors	to increase up to 5% the web visitors	129% increase on web visitors ¹⁴	100 %
Media outreach Digital engagement- Followers	to increase up to 5% the followers	11% increase on followers	100 %
Media outreach Digital engagement- Engagements	to increase up to 5%	-3% of decrease ¹⁵	0 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

We registered 13,210 media mentions, 94% of which were attributed to the three campaigns on cohesion, climate change and democracy, with Ukraine as an overarching communication priority.

Media and communication efforts focused on the following themes:

Bringing Europe closer to its citizens

The communication campaign "**A new chapter for EU democracy**", aimed at supporting local and regional politicians in their citizen participation activities. The main activities of the roadmap towards the European elections in 2024 were divided into three phases – pre-campaign, campaign and post-campaign – highlighting the importance of supporting EU democracy. The 14th EuroPCOM conference was all about democracy. It gathered 1,400 registered participants and was considered a real success.

The **Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors** is generating relevant impact by bringing Europe closer to local communities and encouraging local and regional council-

¹³ Please note that comparison with previous report is not possible due to a change in the reporting methodology. Data show that 2023 was very good year in terms of increased outreach, both by and for the Members. The results show steady progress during the year, with media mentions particularly strong in the second half of the year. This was mainly thanks to the media partnerships which continued to provide the best value for money in terms of media mentions as well as to the 21st European Week of Regions and Cities, which continues to be the largest EU interinstitutional event dedicated to cohesion policy across Europe.

¹⁴ The data in the second half of 2023 is closer to the reality, as the old tool counted only the views when the person specifically accepted the cookies (if they refused them or simply ignored them, they were not counted). In 2024 we expect this number to be even higher since we will cover the full year with the new tool and count all 'grey-zone' users. The CoR website registered 1.4 million page views, with 18.2% returning visitors. In relation to the website, in June 2023 Google Analytics, the system we used to measure website visitor's and their behaviour, was replaced by EU Analytics, a tool developed by the EU institutions. The CoR website registered 1.4 million page views, with 18.2% returning visitors. Due to the development of a customised analytics dashboard for webstreaming, we can report that 230 plenary sessions, events and meetings were streamed in 2023, generating more than 22,000 viewers worldwide. These 22,000 are visitors on our website and VoDs, however, these may only be a fraction of the total audience, since the streams are also embedded to other websites and players of other institutions that we cannot track traffic for.

At the beginning of April 2023, we switched to the new Dynamics 365. This cloud-based platform allows us to orchestrate personalized emails and newsletters to increase the engagement of our audience and have more impact with all our communications.

¹⁵ Industry reports show that the drop of engagement is a global phenomenon and governmental social media responds to it by selecting platforms and formats that work best instead of broadcasting to all. Mentions by some "ambassador" members.

lors to organise EU and CoR related activities within their regions, cities and villages. The 2023 Young elected politicians (YEP) programme's cohort involves 156 YEPs covering all EU member states and, for the first time, all EU candidate countries, bringing the total amount of participants in the YEP programme since its establishment to 836.

Building resilient and innovative local communities

The 2023 «**Building resilient and innovative local communities**» campaign addressed the climate and energy crises, resilience of regions and cities against climate disasters and other emergencies, and upskilling and reskilling of the EU's workforce for green and digital transitions, including the CoR's work on the **European Year of Skills** (EYS), one of the key campaign assets, together with the EU Green Deal and the resilience of regions and cities.

Cohesion as a fundamental value

Two new **#CohesionAlliance** initiatives were launched: an online consultation on the future of cohesion policy, with 284 respondents and a call for «Cohesion Local Stories» with 34 inputs.

The 21st edition of the **European Week of Regions and Cities** confirmed itself as the largest EU inter-institutional event dedicated to cohesion themes across the EU, with 8,418 registered participants on site and over 3,000 online, including some 600 elected representatives, 244 sessions and 210 workshops.

A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the CoR and the European Parliament on Communication in the run-up and follow-up to European elections 2024, where the CoR has a key role to play from a democratic, policy and institutional point of view.

CBF 5. Organise dialogue with regional and local authorities in candidate countries and neighbouring partner countries.

OBJECTIVE 10. Continued support to the enlargement process from the subnational angle (now also for Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia).

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of meetings of enlargement bodies over the course of the year	at least 10 meetings, incl. at least 2 by WG Ukraine	12 meetings	100 %
Number of MEPs involved in CoR's enlargement activities	5 MEPs	2 MEPs	40 %
European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine is included in the structure of the EC's Ukraine Reconstruction Platform and invited to its meetings.	Achieved	Not Achieved ¹⁶	0 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Supported and coordinated solidarity efforts

The global geopolitical landscape in 2023 was marked by complexity. The war in Ukraine, whose end does not seem

to be in sight, and the war between Israel et Hamas are inflection points that require multilevel action.

On 4 and 5 May, the CoR organised an Info Point on the Summer Camps for Ukrainian children initiative. It was set up on the side of

the meetings organised in the context of the [Enlargement Day](#), and in particular during the meeting of the [5th Working Group on](#)

¹⁶ The EC's Ukraine Reconstruction Platform is not driven by the European Committee of the Regions. At the Ukraine Recovery Conference that was held in June 2023 in London, the European Commission presented a proposal for a €50 billion package of grants and loans to support Ukraine's reconstruction through to 2027, conditioning the plan on local and regional governments being fully involved. In this regard, in 2023 the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine was very active in identifying strategic joint priorities and coordinate their actions over the next year.

[Ukraine](#). It encouraged more cities and regions to join this initiative and provide practical information on how they can organize a summer camp, drawing on [last year's experiences](#) and information provided during a targeted online information session organised on 3 May 2023 in collaboration with the Association of Ukrainian Cities.

Summer camps for Ukrainian children in European cities and villages are part of a broader show of solidarity by

the EU's cities and regions, ranging from humanitarian aid to twinning partnerships and commitments to support the [reconstruction of Ukraine](#). They gave these children the chance to stay with their peers and receive targeted psychological support to stabilize their emotional state and help distract them from traumatising experiences for the second year running.

OBJECTIVE 11. European Neighbourhood: Strengthen ties with LRAs from Eastern partnership countries and Mediterranean partner countries.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
CORLEAP mentioned in conclusions of Eastern Partnership summit 2023 (if confirmed)	Achieved	Not achieved ¹⁷	0 %
Number of CORLEAP thematic reports adopted	1-2 thematic reports	2 thematic reports	100 %
Number of ARLEM representatives at UfM ministerial meetings and UfM regional forum	3-4 ARLEM representatives	2 ARLEM representatives	67 %
Number of UfM speakers at ARLEM meetings	Maintain 2022 levels	Partially achieved ¹⁸	67 %
ARLEM mentioned in conclusions of UfM regional forum	Achieved	Achieved ¹⁹	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Supporting LRAs in Eastern Partnership countries

The CoR's backing for Ukraine's reconstruction efforts, among other, consists of serving as the secretariat of the European Alliance for Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, forms part of a 10-point support package on the part of the CoR.

Other assistance includes offering office space for Ukrainian cities, regions and territorial associations. On 30 November, the city of Vinnitsya opened a liaison office on the premises of the CoR in Brussels.

¹⁷ Eastern as Partnership summit was not held.

¹⁸ Flight cancellation did not allow further attendance/participation.

¹⁹ UfM didn't deliver any final declaration with conclusions. ARLEM took the floor despite exceptionally high attendance, which is a more relevant achievement than being mentioned in the conclusions.

OBJECTIVE 12. Support development cooperation at a local / regional angle.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of CoR members participating at the biannual Forum	At least 30 CoR members	41 CoR members	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Supporting development cooperation from the local and regional perspective

The 8th edition of the forum «Cities and Regions for International Partnerships» took place between 29 November 2023 and 1 December 2023. It was organised jointly by the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. It aimed at reflecting on the contribution of regions and cities to the EU Global gateway initiative and focused on Inclusion, Innovation and Investment at local level, and the role of intermediary cities.

CBF 6. Provide and further develop key administrative support areas: HR, Financial management, ICT, Translation, Infrastructure, Legal Service.

OBJECTIVE 13. Support and follow-up on CFAA meetings, coordinate the management planning and reporting cycle and carry out other horizontal administrative functions in an efficient and transparent way.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of CFAA meetings organised in the year	5 meetings in 2023	5 meetings in 2023	100 %
Percentage of staff coming to work by a green transport mode (walk, bike or public transport)	70% of staff	75.8% ²⁰ of staff	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Organisation of CFAA meetings

Five CFAA meetings were organised in 2023, in addition to one written consultation on CoR members' specific subject. The related support was provided including logistical aspects, content preparation, drafting of the various briefings and

²⁰ Latest results of the 2021 mobility survey.

related background information. A new IT platform based on SharePoint and PowerAutomate for the CFAA content preparation was developed in 2023 and is running and maintained since then.

Planning and Reporting; green efficiency

The **Convergence project**, adopted in autumn 2021, streamlined the planning & reporting cycle, the risk management, the impact assessment and the business continuity to make them more strategic, instilled by the mission and political priorities of the CoR and coherent amongst themselves. Most of the processes entailed in the project were reviewed and simplified during 2022 and the last two, the **Annual Activity Report** and **Business Continuity** have been finalised in 2023. The new methodology has been successfully implemented for each one of the processes' first exercise.

Important improvements towards a more purposeful **Planning and Reporting**, aligning it in an optimal manner to the mission, means and risks of the institution, were included in the 2024 exercise (prepared in autumn 2023), notably:

- **Cross-service workshops** for a better definition of objectives focusing on what will be done by the Institution as a whole instead of focusing on what will be done by each Directorate independently.
- **Improved indicators** with a focus on relevance, measurability and year-to-year comparison for better data analysis and reporting.
- **Access to the Convergence platform** has been opened to all staff, allowing collaborative work in the contributions and reducing the amount of email exchanges needed for approving the results.

The planning & reporting cycle was timely coordinated (**2024 Annual Operational Working Plan** by the end of 2023 and, simultaneously, the risk analysis 2024 was carried out and adopted by February 2024, finally, the 2022 **Annual Activity Report** was completed by end June 2023).

In 2023, the development of the Convergence platform has continued in order to enable the implementation of the **Project Convergence**: a SharePoint based tool for planning, reporting, risk assessment, business continuity and some aspects of Internal Control. It includes a Monitoring tool that substitutes the complex and barely used Rolling Actions Plan and allows the follow up, in the same tool, of punctual actions derived from the Annual Operational Working Plan objectives, and of mitigating measures to tackle both identified risks and exceptions.

Further improvements have been done in the platform to allow the electronic management of all instruments and decentralised collaborative work, an improved data quality and security, and to enable the monitoring, analysis and reporting on the CoR's performance and impact for a smarter administration.

Business Continuity

A new **Business Continuity (BC)** Framework was adopted in December 2022, aiming at making the methodology more strategic, practical, self-contained, concise, clear,

known and practiced, and drawing lessons from the experience gained with the handling of the extraordinary COVID-19 situation.

In 2023 the implementation of the new Business Continuity policy was resumed with the completion of the **Strategic Business Impact Analysis**, defining the Core business functions of the Institution and the launching of the **Operational Business Impact Analysis**, aiming at assessing the priority activities necessary to resume the CoR's Core business functions, the time limits for it, the responsible staff, the recovery strategies and the resources required.

The new **BC methodology** has been digitalised within the Convergence platform, the new BC Duty officer and backup have been trained in the use of Ring-Ring for the management of communications during a BC situation and BC Correspondents were designated per every service and trained by the BC Department.

Cooperation agreement with the EESC

As foreseen in the new **Cooperation Agreement with the EESC**, a new Directorate dedicated to IT was set up in the Joint Services at the end of 2022. Year 2023 was the first full year of the operation of the **Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology**.

Regarding budget, the lowest common denominator principle was followed again, where necessary, for the establishment of the Joint Services 2023 budget, based upon the Budgets of the two Committees adopted by the **Budget Authority**.

Sustainable staff missions and green commuting modes

Building on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic, works on a **revised mission guide** aiming at reducing the number of missions (only where physical presence has a genuine added value as compared to remote participation via videoconferencing), at increasing the impact and reach out of staff missions and at fostering sustainable traveling modes, have been pursued with an initial view on adopting a revised mission guide in the course of 2023.

While revising the CoR mission guide, inspiration was taken from the changes proposed by the Commission. However, the first version of the **EC revised guide**, shared in July 2023, has still undergone various modifications for clarifications and internal consultations are still ongoing in February 2024. The CoR is waiting for the latest EC version to finalize its own version and launch internal consultations.

A **staff survey** was organised in Autumn 2021 (organised every 4 years) to assess their envisaged means of transport for home-office commuting in the post COVID-19 era. The participation rate of 50% can overall be considered duly representative. The fact that this is lower than for the previous survey organized in 2017 (58%) stems to a large

extent from the uncertainty (in Autumn 2021) regarding the **post-COVID-19 teleworking rules**. The results of the 2021 mobility survey demonstrate progress in the use of greener commuting modes, with 75.8% of staff members doing so. This fed into a **new 2022-2024 mobility plan** (Plan de déplacement d'entreprise– PDE) submitted to the Brussels regional authorities in February 2022.

Simplification projects

The implementation of the many **simplification projects started** in 2021 has continued in 2023. Almost 90% of the projects launched were fully implemented by the year. Beside the mentioned further completion of the **Convergence project**, examples of projects finalised in 2023 include:

- The **digitalisation of many administrative processes**, among which the CFAA workflow for the approval of the CFAA related documents, the sensitive posts evaluation exercise, and a new fully digitalised Register of Procedures;
- The **updating of written procedures** and reduction of their number;
- The **revision, updating and reduction of legal documents** (such as decisions and service instructions).

The implementation of the projects resulted in increased work quality, increased traceability, time savings, and contributed to reducing the carbon footprint (thanks to the saving of paper) and to improving the image of the institution perceived by staff.

Digitalisation and Smart House

Possibilities for further **digitalisation and new working methods** continued to be analysed and put in place to further gain in efficiency. In 2023 a project was led in order to define the best tool for the electronic management of form-based workflows concluding that **Microsoft 365 tools** had the potential to cater for the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance business needs. As a follow up, many processes started being simplified and digitalised in 2023 through Microsoft 365 tools. This work helps covering the gap between the IT development and the common user, for those small projects that are too big to be treated by the IT helpdesk but are too small to fit in the CoR's IT work plan, providing agility and flexibility to the **CoR's digital strategy**. Individual coaching on MS 365 tools were also provided to staff.

The use of **qualified electronic signatures** for signing contracts by authorizing officers was encouraged throughout the year (newsletter, information sessions, setting up a help desk). This signature is recognised to have equivalent legal effect to a handwritten ('blue ink') signature in all EU Member States and provides the highest level of legal security as to the authenticity of the document and the identity of the signatory.

Task Force on New Ways of Working

In addition, the **joint Task Force on "new ways of working" (NWoW)**, established jointly with the EESC to reflect on possible further implementation of NWoW features, particularly regarding the use of the office space, concluded its analysis and developed few scenarios and alternative options allowing the optimisation of the use of the office space, taking into consideration the current working time arrangements, the building strategy and the specific needs of each Committee.

Data protection

As of 2023, the **DPO** started a **mapping exercise** on all CoR data processing activities, that continues in 2024. The aim is to identify all personal data processing, establish transparent records of processing activities, inform accordingly data subjects by way of **data protection notices**, as well as to put in place more efficient, up-to-date and compliant **data protection proceedings**, allowing also better communication activities by requesting and storing fully informed consent for further outreach by the CoR.

A completely **revised internal register** has been set up in 2023 by using SharePoint as platform, allowing interactivity with all responsible delegated controllers and cross-checking activities by the DPO.

On 14 April 2023, a **joint controllership arrangement** has been signed with EESC on the handling of joint data protection processing activities, which led to setting up a joint EESC-CoR data protection register.

Since 2023, a data protection correspondents' network has been put in place to increase awareness and facilitate the exchange of information and best practices on data protection matters.

In 2023, a CoR guidance on data breach, as well as a data breach central register has been established.

OBJECTIVE 14. Ensure appropriate budget allocation, uphold sound and regular management of financial resources and monitor a cost-effective internal control environment in the institution.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Acceptance of the CoR's budget by the Budget authority	CoR Draft Budget 2024 to be adopted by the CoR's Plenary in March 2023	Achieved ²¹	100 %
Acceptance of external transfers by the Budget authority	100% of acceptance	100% of acceptance ²²	100 %
Budget outturn (percentage of commitment execution)	99% of commitment execution	99.9% of commitment execution ²³	100 %
Percentage of payments execution (C1 appropriations at the end of the year N)	90% of payments execution	91.2% of payments execution	100 %
Discharge from Discharge Authority	Discharge obtained (for 2021 and 2022)	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Budget management

Quarterly in-depth reviews of 2023 budget execution were carried out in April, July and October 2023 as well as **budget execution optimisation** was coordinated through preparation, handling and execution of external and internal transfers of appropriations (respectively with or without involvement of the Budget Authority), respecting the set deadlines.

During the 2023 budget implementation year (i) **25 internal transfers of appropriations** were executed (in total for € 0.98 million), and (ii) **6 external transfers of appropriations** have been approved by the Budget Authority and executed by the CoR thereafter for a total of € 1.86 million. Thus, at the end of 2023 some **€ 2.84 million** (representing 2.4% of the CoR 2023 final budget) **were reallocated** to different domains/projects that needed a reinforcement.

The European Commission tabled the **draft Amending Budget 4/2023** in October 2023. It was **adopted by the Budget Authority in November 2023**. The scope of the Amending budget was limited to salary related appropriations and remaining needs for the energy consumption. The CoR has asked and obtained the following additional appropriations via an amending budget:

- € 300 000 for the remuneration and allowances (BL 1200);
- € 250 000 for its share of the remaining energy cost (BL 2024, joint cost with the EESC).

The Draft Budget 2024 was established under the political guidance of the President, Conference of Presidents, Bureau and CFAA as well as it was followed-up during the European Commission's, the Council's, the European Parliament's and Conciliation's readings of the CoR's DB 2024.

The **project "Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU"** was further developed throughout 2022. The project aimed to correct the historical understaffing and under-financing of the CoR compared with similar bodies while increasing the CoR's added value for the EU, taking up proposals made by the **Conference on the Future of Europe**.

Following its adoption by the CoR Bureau and Plenary it was submitted to the European Commission in June 2022 via an Amending Letter to the Draft Budget 2023. On 23 August 2022 the European Commission President sent a formal answer to the CoR President informing the latter that the Commission is not in a position to integrate the CoR's request into Amending Letter 1/2023.

²¹ CoR definitive 2024 budget was adopted by the Budget Authority in November 2023. It included 4.5% increase in comparison with the final CoR 2023 budget (Amending budget 4/2023 included).

²² 2023 budget year, 6 out of 6.

²³ 2023 outturn.

This project was pursued by the CoR during 2024 budget process. In a separate envelope of its Draft Budget 2024 estimates, the CoR had requested additional budget for the «Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU» project (i.e. 50% of the initial project): 50 new posts for permanent and temporary staff + 50 contract agents i.e. an additional € 14.7 million in appropriations adding further 12.6% to the CoR DB 2024.

However, during 2024 budget process the European Commission has cut again all CoR requested resources (funding and staff) for the «Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU» project. This cut was not reinstated during the rest of 2024 budget process, and, thus, the CoR did not obtain any funding for this project.

Public Procurement

The CoR continued the digitalisation of its public procurement sector by transitioning to **PPMT (Public Procurement Management Tool)** for tender procedures above Directive threshold (i.e., >140,000€). PPMT is an eProcurement tool developed by JRC, which CoR has acquired through a SLA with DIGIT. PPMT is rolled out in phases, with the first module '**ePreparation**', which covers the preparatory and publication steps of the procurement process, being kicked-off in October 2023.

This digital tool allows for a **greater simplification and harmonisation of the procurement process**, which will eventually become fully integrated, automated and paperless, limiting to the strict minimum the manual input of data and covering the entire procurement process (i.e., all procedures, contract types and procurement steps) from the preparation of the procedure, to the execution, the contract implementation and up to the inventory and logistics management.

From 1 April 2022 the CoR stopped accepting invoices received in pdf format. Since then, the number of suppliers sending electronic invoices (via E-PRIOR) has significantly increased. As a result, **76% of all commercial invoices registered in 2023 were electronic**.

Financial management and control

The **simplified workflow** set up since the 1st of July 2021 whereby the ex-ante verification of certain low risk/value transactions has been limited to a purely technical validation (counterbalanced by a sample based ex-post verification performed on a quarterly basis) has been evaluated after one year in 2022. Even if the simplified workflow has saved very limited resources in the first year (0.2 FTE), it has been decided to pursue with this workflow for an indefinite period but limited to the files relating the reimbursements to members and missions of staff.

In 2023, the first two editions of a **finance newsletter** were launched and distributed to financial actors. The purpose of this newsletter is to share knowledge, best practices and financial regulatory updates with the CoR financial community and is foreseen to be distributed 2-3 times per year in the future.

The partially digitalised and simplified procedure (with the right balance between responsibilities and controls) for **defining financial workflows and appointing financial actors** assisting the authorising officer by subdelegation (AOS) has been implemented throughout 2023.

Actions in the sphere of internal control continued to be monitored in the **Internal Control Standards working group** throughout 2023. More details are to be found in Chapter 3. As far as the specific issue of exception reports is concerned, the number of financial exception reports registered in 2023 decreased compared with 2022.

OBJECTIVE 15. Optimise the use of human resources on the basis of the institution's talent management strategy and further develop human resources policies adapted to the institution's priorities.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Percentage of occupied posts at the end of the year	>95% of occupied posts yearly	96.4% of occupied posts yearly	100 %
Gender balance in senior management	M: 60% F: 40%	M: 55.6% F: 44.4%	100 %
Number of cases of internal mobility	10 internal mobility cases	7 internal mobility cases	70 %
Average number of training days per staff member	5 days	5.2 days	100 %
Percentage of staff having attended the training course on Ethics	75% of staff	79.40% of staff	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Talent management

In 2023, the implementing provisions to the **talent management strategy** prepared by the HR services and discussed with the staff representatives has been finalised and a new decision has been adopted. The package contains provisions for establishing an enhanced, proactive job rotation scheme for certain categories of staff as from 01/01/2024.

Eight middle and senior managers took part in the **360° Feedback exercise** in 2023. The second 'Impact 360 group report', measuring the impact of the CoR leaders on the organisation, confirmed the good results as in 2022 (gaps between contributors' feedback and managers self-evaluation is not relevant and CoR managers maintain their position on step 3 (out of 4) of the Performance Curve. As individual management support, 2 senior managers and 2 middle managers have made use of the opportunity to work with a professional coach.

The CoR internal **job shadowing exercise** involved 13 guests and 13 hosts, while the first interinstitutional job shadowing (organised for the first time by the European School of Administration in cooperation with the CoR) involved 10 EUIs (including CoR), 32 colleagues from other EUIs hosted by CoR and 18 CoR staff shadowing other EUIs. The satisfaction rate for the internal job shadowing was the highest ever (8.46) and the feedback very positive.

The **induction programme for newcomers** (introduced in 2021) was improved further with the launch of a new revised e-Learning training 'Onboarding', presenting new features like D&I topics. In 2023, the last point of this pro-

gramme (the mentor network) could not be launched because of the human resources situation.

In 2023, the **staff assessment system** at the CoR, which allows for a qualitative assessment based on the competency framework of the institution, was adapted, notably to reflect the administrative cooperation agreement with the EESC and the newly adopted **EPSO competency framework**.

Staff allocation and recruitment

The year 2023 saw the continuation of efforts to **strengthen the CoR's legislative role** and ensure optimal use of the available expertise in line with the institution's political and administrative priorities, again against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and budgetary constraints due to high inflation.

As a part of the implementation of the new cooperation agreement with the EESC, the **new director of IIT Directorate** was appointed in Autumn 2023, enhancing the gender balance in senior management. Staff have been assigned to the new units created to implement the **digital and innovative strategy** of the CoR. Mergers of linguistic services continued also in 2023.

Following a social dialogue, an **updated scheme for appointment of functional managers** has been put in place in 2023. Six additional functional managers were nominated in 2023.

A second **call for expression of interest** to attract **seconded national experts** was organised early 2023 with the aim of enhancing cooperation between LRAs and the CoR. A

promotion campaign on CoR web pages and social media channels (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook) was also conducted.

Secondments to other institutions in the framework of inter-institutional job shadowing have also been offered in 2023.

HR services were subject to an internal **audit on management of vacant posts** in 2022. Most of the recommendations of the audit were implemented during 2023.

Staff engagement

Following a **wide consultation** both with staff representatives and with managers, the main features of the pilot project on working regime, which is based on a **hybrid way of working** and on **result-based management**, were confirmed. The consultations had confirmed a widespread satisfaction with the balance found in terms of working time and telework, both with managers and staff. The **new decision on working regime** was finalised in 2023. It confirms the main features of the pilot project.

To keep the high level of commitment, sense of belonging and motivation of staff, **HR** services continue to publish **newsletters twice a month** containing various information keeping the staff constantly up to date with the situation regarding health and wellbeing, HR matters, L&D opportunities, internal mobilities and career guidance, new rules and measures of the institution, etc. These newsletters are a valuable tool for internal communication.

The **five-years strategy and action plan for Diversity and inclusion 2022/2026** was designed to foster diversity and inclusion through a range of different channels, means and attention areas. Gender balance and in particular gender balance in management is still a top priority. Over the past year, strides have been made towards a **better gender balance**. Middle management positions saw a rise in the percentage of women from 29.7% in 2022 to 32.5% in 2023, indicating a promising trend.

Even more remarkable, **senior management positions** witnessed a substantial increase from 37.5% in 2022 to 44.4% in 2023, signaling a commitment to inclusivity at the highest levels.

In addition, new areas of attention have been set such as the free expression of convictions and beliefs to foster **dialogue on religious and philosophical diversity**. In 2023, Mr. Vincent Depaigne, the European Commission Coordinator for the dialogue between the EC & churches, religious associations or communities, & philosophical & non-confessional organisations was invited to speak about the diversity of convictions & beliefs in Europe.

Health and well-being

Preventative actions continued to be actively promoted by HR and the medical and social services in order to enhance **health and well-being** at work. Prevention programmes were organised such as stress monitoring, personalised follow-up and a pilot project with a physiotherapist/personal

trainer at work. An awareness raising campaign **“Thursdays for health”** is foreseen to be launched in spring 2024.

In 2023, staff in medical leave continued to be closely monitored, through a **tailored-made policy on long-term absences** (more than 3 weeks). This policy included keeping contact with staff in sick leave, in some cases through expertise medical control. CoR was particularly active to step up its efforts **against absenteeism** during the year: a comprehensive series of trainings on how to manage absenteeism were organised for managers and an inter-institutional working group on absenteeism was set up at the initiative of CoR. This proactive policy was fruitful with the **sick leave rate decreasing over 2023**.

HR implementing decisions and general matters

The use of **LinkedIn recruitment** posts raises awareness and impact of the vacancy notice on the targeted population, resulting in a higher number of applications of excellent quality. The use of these publications to recruit specialist profiles or non-permanent staff in 2023 has generated a growing number of applications allowing for the recruitment of talented colleagues. Furthermore, the **co-operation with EPSO** to relay CoR recruitment notices on the EU CAREERS website and on EPSO-related social media accounts has been strengthened.

While struggling to recruit officials due to the lack of EPSO lists and in the expectation of the benefits of the new EPSO competition scheme, it is essential that the CoR takes action to enhance its visibility, at career-related events. Both the Recruitment and career unit and the Traineeships office were present at the CoR flagship event **#EURegion-Week** with the aim to present **the CoR as an employer of choice** both to the general public and to staff already employed by the European institutions.

In addition, a comprehensive **«Start building your EU career with us»** communication package (leaflet, brochure, roll-up) was created.

CoR Decision No 157/2023 on the ethical rules applicable to the Secretariat of the European Committee of the Regions was adopted in December 2023 in order to clarify the **ethical framework** of the institution, by consolidating in a single text all the ethical rules applicable to staff members as recommended by the Audit on Ethics.

Other HR related decisions were revised in order to improve and clarify rules and procedures, by notably also integrating ethics related rules and obligations, as recommended by the Audit on Ethics: on **Annual and special leave (CoR Decision No 137/2023, adopted on 14/11/2023)**, on **Trainees and on Seconded national experts (Decision 41/2023)**, including related guides and templates.

HR Legal Advising

Legal advising on HR and Staff Regulations matters is provided daily, including drafting and reviewing documents with legal impact.

In 2023 **new decisions** were prepared on ethical rules, on authorised travel, on the new composition of the Disciplinary Board and on the empowerment for «laissez-passer»; the decisions on type of post and post titles, CCP, END and on mobility were revised, as well additions in the **Guide for Members on whistleblowing and data protection rules**.

Four **joint complaint procedures** were successfully handled in the field of promotion procedure (replies to Article 90(2) SR) and the defense of the CoR at the General Court T-260/22 (plea and rejoinder), without external lawyer. On 15/2/2023, the Tribunal rejected the appeal by the four applications and ordered them to bear their own costs and those of the CoR.

EESC complaint and whistleblowing procedures concerning a CoR staff member have also been handled, as well as handling the followed-up conflict management in close cooperation with EESC (hearings, collective meetings, establishment of an action plan including special training and coaching sessions), that has been finalized by a closure meeting with the SGs of both Committees on 7/12/2023.

As **OLAF contact point** for ongoing investigation concerning in 2023 one CoR staff member, the implementation of **OLAF's recommendations** was monitored and follow-up decisions to the OLAF's recommendations were drafted: a decision to recover undue sums and a decision of referral to the Disciplinary Board.

The CoR is represented by contributing with impact at several Bodies as the **Staff Regulations Committee, CPQS** and its sub-working groups, notably on the drafting of the new Invalidity Handbook, on the implementation of the Court judgment Picard concerning pension rights for agents, on Ethics rules, on Absenteeism and on Personal files, as well as initially on the Ethics Body.

The training on Ethics and Integrity, being a CoR internal and mandatory training, was further updated and continued to be regularly provided. In 2023, 7 training sessions were provided to the staff.

OBJECTIVE 16. Provide AOD with opinion and related recommendations on adequacy of RM, control and governance processes in the framework of his declarations for 2023 and for the preparation of the 2024 declaration, with references to the areas already audited.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Level of acceptance of the audit recommendations by the Authorising Officer by Delegation.	100% of acceptance	100% of acceptance	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

The **internal audit work programme 2023** foresaw an audit on the **performance of IT** organization which was achieved. It also mentioned as far as possible, to undertake an audit on personal data protection which was in contradictory procedure at the end the year.

In addition, **five audit follow-ups** were performed in 2023 which are:

- Adequacy of planning and management of allowances and reimbursement to members for

attendances at meetings,

- Procurement procedure for logistics,
- Ethics staff awareness,
- Performance of EMAS,
- Management of vacant posts.

The first four were closed whilst the last one has to be implemented after the adoption of the Human Resources report by the CFAA.

OBJECTIVE 17. Provide independent legal advice to the Committee's members, bodies and departments.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Average time for issuing a legal opinion upon request	Within 5 working days (simple request) - 20 working days (complex request)	Achieved	100 %
Percentage of replied consultations by the Secretary-General or the lead Committee department.	100 % of consultations received replied.	Achieved	100 %
Continuous professional training of members of the Legal Service in all areas of law relevant to the Committee.	100 % of staff	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Ensuring **independent legal advice** to the Committee's members, bodies and departments is key for the functioning of the CoR. Within this context, an undefined number of requests for advice and legal assessment sent by the services and by both Cabinets on a wide range of legal topics have been addressed. As an example, this activity involves the interpretation of **the CoR Rules of Procedure (RoP), MoUs, EGTCs**, questions on **public procurement, Staff Regulations, financial matters, copyright infringements**, etc. A constant research is required in view of ensuring high quality in this domain.

Requests for access to CoR's documents from third parties have also been dealt with successfully.

Several copyright infringements against the CoR and consultations from the CoR services on intellectual property rights and copyrights were managed in close cooperation with the JRC (European Commission).

After several letters addressed by the CoR, the Council of the EU shared with the CoR the requested multi-column tables drafted in the framework of the 'trilogues' of the ordinary legislative procedure, and specifically the documents of the 4th column, on five legislative proposals. The CoR subsequently requested to be granted **access to further legislative procedures**.

The Bureau of the CoR adopted the mandate for the CoR representative in the negotiations on the **Agreement on the EU Ethics Body** and legal advice was provided during the technical and political meetings of these negotiations with the other EU institutions.

Assistance and legal assessment was provided on the proposal for revision of the cooperation agreements EC-CoR and EP-CoR.

Legal advice was given to the task force on Ukraine and on gender equality.

OBJECTIVE 18. Contribute to the development and improvement of the Committee's internal legal framework.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of requests for drafting new or amending legal acts replied in due time.	100% replied in due time.	Achieved	100 %
Number of adequate ex ante consultations by lead Committee departments on draft internal legal acts replied in due time.	100% replied in due time	Achieved	100 %
Revision by the Legal Service of draft cooperation agreements and service-level agreements between the Committee and third parties in due time.	100% of agreements revised in due time	Achieved	100 %
Revision of templates of legal or contractual instruments submitted for review by the lead Committee department in due time.	100% of templates revised in due time.	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Clear, comprehensive, Union law-compliant internal rules and procedures

The CoR maintains clear, comprehensive, EU law-compliant internal rules and procedures.

Revision of the CoR RoP:

- The Bureau of the CoR adopted the mandate to establish an 'ad hoc' commission in charge of the **revision of the CoR RoP** according with Procedure SG.JUR/01, aiming to ensure the smooth running of the revision procedure, in line with section 4.8.2 of the Management Plan 2022 - 2023 - objective 1-main output 1. The mandate was adopted in two phases, first in March 2023 and subsequently, as a second step in July 2023.
- As an outcome of the first step of the mandate, new **Rule 80 of the RoP** establishing a legal basis permitting certain meetings of the bodies of the CoR to be held in a hybrid or remote format under normal circumstances was adopted.

- Works were done in 2023 to prepare a more **extensive modification** of the RoP and several documents with proposals were drafted. The new RoP are expected to be adopted by the Plenary Assembly in June 2024.

Several Legal acts were drafted and prepared for adoption by the relevant bodies of the CoR (5 Bureau regulations, 1 Bureau decision, 1 President decision).

The workflow procedure for the conclusion and management of cooperation agreements and action plans was revised in 2023.

A **decision on the validity and admissibility of electronic documents and the use of electronic signature** within the CoR was drafted and discussed with all CoR Directors. This decision has not yet been adopted.

OBJECTIVE 19. Represent the Committee's interests in the context of (extra)judicial proceedings.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Timely input provided to proceedings before the Courts.	100% of input provided before the Courts in due time.	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Effective, cost-efficient litigation strategies

The protection of the CoR legal interests was ensured before the Dutch-Speaking Commercial Court of Brussels in a public procurement case with the assistance of an external Law firm. These proceedings will be held over the year 2024.

The CoR, in connection with the EESC, ensured the **protection of the CoR legal interests** concerning the complaint on a case on alleged discrimination introduced by the Belgian competent organism, UNIA. The complaint was withdrawn and the case was not brought before the Belgian courts.

The recovering of 5,280 EUR was ensured as the costs of proceeding established by the CJEU in its judgment in the case C-539/21 P, 'CE vs. Comité européen des régions' through a monthly breakdown.

A proper **collaboration with the EU Ombudsman** was ensured in an enquiry related to access to documents and received a final Decision resolving the complaint favorably.

In 2023 seven decisions were signed by the Secretary-General on complaints introduced by persons to whom the Staff Regulations apply (Article 90.2).

The protection of the CoR legal and financial interests in four copyright infringement cases was ensured. In three cases the CoR started to negotiate better conditions for possible compensation with the complainants. In all cases, the arguments put forward were finally successful in avoiding payment or referral to courts.

OBJECTIVE 20. Implementing the building strategy.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Defining a strategy on the use of the first floor of JDE (library zone) and VMA building (catering zone) as well as of the ground floor of BvS (printshop zone), taking into account needs of Members and staff;	Endorsement before end 2023	Ongoing ²⁴	30 %
Integrating in its building projects the principles of the New European Bauhaus	Integrating in all its building projects the principles of the New European Bauhaus	Ongoing	90 %
Brussels Capital Region energy reduction "PLAGE" legislation working plan adoption and its practical implementation	Acceptance before April 2023 by Brussels Capital Region of Committee's "PLAGE" action plan	Ongoing	30 %
Implementing the Green Deal objectives	Reducing gas and electricity consumption; production of own renewable energy; green public procurement, circular products; rainwater recovery; improving biodiversity on its own infrastructure; introducing in all spaces reasonable flexibility	Ongoing ²⁵	30 %
Building strategy integrating multi annual planning, urgences due to worn and outdated installations, new needs, technical aspects, environmental challenges, administrative framework, a budget strategy as well as the continuity of services	Endorsement before end 2023 on political level	Ongoing ²⁶	10 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Before summer 2023, 2 proposals of **joint AV facility** on the first floor of the JDE have been presented to the Secretary General and CFAA Members. In September 2023 the Presidents of both Committees decided to go forward with a joint AV facility in the library space, at reasonably moderate cost. Detailed technical studies have been ongoing since October 2023, as well as negotiations with external contractors to reach acceptable bids.

The strategy for using the catering area of VMA and the ground floor of the BvS is yet to be developed.

The **principles of the New European Bauhaus** have been integrated in VMA renovation works in 2022 and 2023.

In Spring 2023, the Brussels Capital Region accepted the Committee's **"PLAGE" action plan**. Feasibility study as well as detailed studies of actions are ongoing.

EMAS figures from 2023 are not yet available.

A working group has been created to develop the NWoW policy since September 2022.

An update of the building strategy is yet to be developed.

²⁴ Two proposals are being considered.

²⁵ See the 2023 EMAS environmental statement. In particular, the principle of reasonable flexibility was integrated in the works concluded in 2023 in the VMA building and the installation of a system for rainwater recovery in that building has started in the second half of 2023 and will be concluded in 2024.

²⁶ INFRA participates in HR's working group on New Ways Of Working (NWoW) since September 2022. An update of the building strategy is yet to be developed.

OBJECTIVE 21. Reorganisation of the IMP unit - project Horizont 2025.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Reorganisation of the unit's organisation chart to maximize flexibility and versatility;	Complete merging of 4 into 2 teams	Achieved	100 %
Alignment of the necessary resources with the progressive reduction in the volume of work	Gradual reduction of the machine park and of human resources	Ongoing	95 %
Merge the Copyshop premises with the Offset premises	Complete physical and organizational merge	Achieved	100 %
Integrate the floor ushers service in the unit	Complete integration with the maximum versatility and flexibility to assist the distribution team.	Ongoing ²⁷	70 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

The floor **ushers of both Committees were transferred to the Directorate for Logistics (IMP Unit)** at the end of 2022. In 2023 they were trained to carry out basic distribution tasks and activities related to BPost. Their job descriptions were updated from 01/01/2023 onwards to align to the new organisation.

The **physical merge of the operational services** (print-shop/copyshop and distribution/expedition) in the JDE building as well as the move of the high performing photocopying machines to the JDE building took place at the beginning of November 2023 following extensive infrastructure works to prepare the area which took a bit longer than initially planned. In preparation of the expected synergies from this move and to align the resources to the current workload, a significant **reduction in staff from 28 to 21** in the last 5 years took place. Space was freed up as redundant machines and paper were disposed to allow to accommodate the copy-shop equipment and staff in the JDE area.

In this context, new event-related products for which there is a high demand, are currently further developed in using the remaining machine park.

The **reorganisation of the workflow** in the new set-up which started at the end of 2023 is ongoing and should allow to continuously identifying further areas for generating synergies and using staff more efficiently.

²⁷ The colleagues from the distribution/expedition sector all followed at least a basic training to assist the distribution team. The reorganization of the workflow in the new set-up which started in 2023 and which should complete this integration is ongoing.

OBJECTIVE 22. Preparing the future of catering.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Catering service continuity, if possible, in all service points	No catering interruption	Achieved	100 %
Publication of call for tenders for a new catering contract	Tender together with EP to result in a new catering contract in 2024	Ongoing ²⁸	75 %
Financial compensation to be paid to the catering contractor	No financial compensation	Achieved	100 %
Legal obligations of the Committees according to the collective agreement 32bis (CCT 32bis)	Avoid that the Committees should bear any responsibility	Achieved	100 %
Quality control: - Audit scores - Number of complaints	More than 90% of compliance with external audits- reduction of complaints compared to the previous years	Achieved	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Between September 2021 and 31 December 2023 a continuous catering service has been ensured:

- at the Canteen and JDE Cafeteria, there was continuity of the service;
- the VIP lounges on the JDE first floor have been opened when needed on days with political meetings;
- no additional cafeteria neither the "à la carte" restaurant were opened.

The Catering strategy has been approved by Secretary General in autumn 2021. The preparation of documents for a call for tender started in spring 2023. A meeting with

CSAR took place on 7 November 2023. The call for tender has been published in December 2023.

No financial compensation has been paid between May 2022 and 31 December 2023.

Until the end of 2023, Committees did not bear any responsibility related to the collective agreement 32bis (CCT 32bis).

Several audits have been organised in 2022 and 2023. The global compliance percentage was 89,5%.

²⁸ The Catering strategy has been approved by Secretary General in autumn 2021. The preparation of documents for a call for tender started in spring 2023. A meeting with CSAR took place on 7 November 2023. The call for tender has been published in December 2023. This tender is not together with the EP because the end date of the EP contract is 2 years later than the one of the Committees.

OBJECTIVE 23. Contribute to the implementation of the CoR Digital vision. Provide information systems, IT infrastructure and user support services, according to the best practice of IT management while optimising the use of human and financial resources.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Infrastructure availability	99% of availability	99.80% of availability	100 %
Helpdesk reaction time	95% of reactions within 30s	95.20% of reactions within 30s	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

A new Digital Strategy 2024-2026 was prepared with the vision to «propel our institutions into a future where efficiency, speed, and digital evolution are not just aspirations but the cornerstones of our operations. We envision a **transformation** that places our administration and members at the heart of every solution, where technology seamlessly integrates with our core mission **to serve better, empower efficiently, and evolve continually.**»

Digital Transformation

The main activities during the year for each sector are summarised below:

For **Innovation**, the overall objective was to foster a strategic approach to Innovation/Artificial Intelligence. Staff Guidelines on the use of Artificial Intelligence were adopted and information sessions were organised.

For **Digital Workplace**, the sector engaged with user communities/business on the roll-out and optimal use of new collaboration tools and supported the training units with the IT Digital Skills learning path for staff.

For **Service Desk & User Support**, the main activity was user support via the IT Helpdesk. There were important extensions to the Service Now support tool. The remaining Hybrid Meeting Rooms were installed.

Digital Solutions

The main activities during the year for each sector are summarised below:

- For **Business Solutions**, the sector delivered development projects in the HR, Finance, Political Work and Document Management area. Applications have been adapted to the current needs. The amendments flow was integrated with the translation tools. Analysis and workshops were carried out to prepare a possible step forward to replace Adonis by Ares from the Commission.
- For **Shared Solutions**, the sector delivered the first version of the Design System, released the first phase

of Artemis and upgraded Document Manager.

- For **Business Relation & Analytics**, the sector launched the Dynamics 365 platform, migrated certain local sites to SharePoint Online, deployed Power Apps to modernise some earlier developments, and improved existing reports for budget forecasting, HR and political work.
- For **Architecture & Standards**, the sector defined technical documentation standards, created an AS-IS inventory of IT systems, defined cloud-ready standards and prepared a test strategy.
- In addition, a **Project Management Office** was established.

Digital Platforms

The main activities during the year for each sector are summarised below:

- For **Data Systems**, the sector installed and migrated application servers with configuration of load balancing, and setup database server virtualisation.
- For **Systems Administration**, the sector installed new servers, storage and domain controllers, migrated to Exchange Online, improved device management and configured cloud-proxies.
- For **Cybersecurity**, the sector upgraded the PKI and designed a Red Team exercise. Cybersecurity operations focussed on the “top priorities” of MFA, Patching and User Awareness.
- For **Networks and Telecommunications**, the sector delivered a new network topology and Application Centric infrastructure for the new JDE Data Centre.

OBJECTIVE 24. To further deepen and develop the sustainable multilingualism policy for both Committees, in accordance with the Cooperation Agreement.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Timely submission of translation requests	≥ 90% of translation requests	89.4% of translation requests	99%
Timely delivery of translation requests	> 95% of translation requests	95.86% of translation requests	100%
Documents exceeding maximum length	≤ 5% of documents	5.6% of documents	Not achieved ²⁹
% new versions to documents in translation	< 6% of documents in translation	11.3% of documents in translation	Not achieved ³⁰
Outsourcing rate	≥ 20% of total translated pages	18.02% of total translated pages	90%

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, the European Committee of the Regions has largely achieved its targets under this objective. The two notable exceptions are the percentage of new versions submitted for translation and the percentage of documents exceeding maximum length. Overall, in 2023, CoR largely managed to submit translation requests on time and to deliver the requested translations on time.

In terms of outsourcing, the 2023 result is slightly below the target for CoR documents. On the other hand, the 20% outsourcing target was achieved with regard to EESC documents. This difference may be explained by the fact that fewer CoR document types are suitable for outsourcing.

²⁹ For more information, please refer to the above qualitative assessment of the objective.

³⁰ For more information, please refer to the above qualitative assessment of the objective.

OBJECTIVE 25. To consolidate relations with DT internal (legislative work) and external (interinstitutional cooperation in translation) stakeholders.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES:



QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

INDICATOR	TARGET FOR 2023	RESULTS from 2023	% OF ACHIEVEMENT
Number of staff participating in Clear writing training	> 2022 level	Achieved ³¹	100 %
Number of edited pages	> 2022 level	Achieved ³²	100 %
Number of organisations represented at DT conference	> 2022 level	Achieved ³³	100 %
Daily workload reference rate	8.2 - 8.7 pages	8.5	100 %

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OR EVENTS OF THE YEAR

In 2023, the European Committee of the Regions achieved all its targets under this objective. The most notable increase was recorded with regard to clear writing training: 119 colleagues took part in clear writing training in 2023, compared to 37 in 2022. While this substantial increase can be partially explained by the delivery of a targeted clear writing course for 51 colleagues of EESC's Directorate D, the number of staff taking part in clear writing courses has nevertheless doubled in comparison to the previous year.

³¹ 119 staff participated (37 in 2022)

³² 12,097 pages edited (11,004 in 2022)

³³ 17 organisations represented (15 in 2022)

3. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL SYSTEMS, AUDIT AND FOLLOW-UP OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY FINANCIAL CONTROL BODIES

3.1 Inherent nature and characteristics of the CoR risk environment

A holistic planning & reporting cycle is organised every year at CoR. In this context, the CoR Annual Operational Working Plan (AOWP) describes the actions which the CoR implements to reach its political and administrative objectives. It reflects the budgetary and human resources mobilised and the actions undertaken.

In parallel, a yearly risk assessment exercise is carried out for the objectives laid down in the AOWP. Following the Risk Analysis methodology, depending on the risk level, risks are stored either in a central risk register or in the decentralised risk register of the respective CoR departments. Whereas the follow-up to the most important risks (laid down in the central risk register) and the related mitigating measures is monitored by the CoR Board of Directors, the implementation of the local risk registers is followed-up by the concerned Directorates.

A risk analysis on the objectives of the 2023 AOWP and the new emerging challenges was performed in 2023 and a central risk register was elaborated on that basis and formally adopted.

At the end of the planning & reporting cycle, the results of actions are reported in the Annual Activity Report and in the Declaration of Assurance of the Authorising Officer by Delegation. Given that the CoR has no operational credits,

its financial and political risks are predominantly tied to its administrative expenditure (and notably the risk of non-respect of the regulatory environment) and to the internal organisation and functioning.

Given the political character of the Institution and the size of the budget, any resource inappropriately spent would indeed constitute a risk. To mitigate this risk, the CoR has organised a centrally monitored internal control environment coupled with a partially decentralised financial model with (central) counterweight in the context of which a central verification service verifies all transactions, with «zero tolerance» towards inappropriate resource spending (see also points 3.4 and 3.5 below).

In 2023 a Sensitive Post exercise was launched to address the risks of misuse of powers delegated to staff. The management of sensitive posts is required under Internal Control Standard 7 on Operational Structures and its aim is to identify genuinely sensitive posts and to implement, whenever necessary, mitigating controls to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. During 2023, preliminary steps were taken including the managers assessment to identify potentially sensitive posts under their respective organisational entities.

3.2 Internal control system

A compliance and effectiveness exercise was launched in 2023 aiming at assessing to what extent the CoR complied with selected Internal Control Standards (ICS) and to what extent their implementation was effective in 2023.

The exercise consisted of a questionnaire designed to evaluate compliance with and effectiveness of the requirements specified for the selected ICSs, with contributions from members of the ICS Working Group responsible for their coordination (at least one person per Directorate). The results were discussed in the ICS Working Group meeting of May 2024.

Already the previous 2022 exercise compliance exercise showed that the overall state of implementation and effectiveness of requirements remained at a high level. The 2023 compliance exercise has shown that the implementation and effectiveness of the requirements of the selected ICSs has stepped up compared to 2022.

Future efforts should focus on a cost-effective consolidation of the level achieved, together with targeted efforts to further step up the level of compliance and the degree of

effectiveness of selected internal control measures in place. In 2023, special attention will be devoted to:

- ICS 3 - Staff allocation and Mobility: In order to retain talent and to fulfil recruitment needs, the CoR organises an internal competition in 2024;
- ICS 8 - Processes and Procedures: The new DIIT's Digital Strategy and the implementation of the NWOW project might result in some changes in the working methods;
- ICS 11 - Document Management: A new CoR data protection register has been set up in Sharepoint in 2023, documenting all personal data processing activities in CoR, replacing the obsolete and incomplete previous internal register. A mapping exercise has been launched by the DPO with all CoR entities to review their processing activities, document them in new ROPAs, DPNs, JCA, DPA and SLAs and set up templates and guidance. CoR should be ready to publish its data protection register on the Internet page in 2024, providing finally visibility on compliance with the data protection rules. Furthermore, the revision of the filing plan will be launched in 2024. With regard to the envisaged migration from ADONIS to ARES, the necessary preparatory steps in the area of document management will be undertaken during 2024.

3.3 Internal Financial Legal Framework

The Internal Financial Rules (IFR) for the implementation of the CoR Budget are in place since 21 July 2022 (Decision No DECB/21/2022) and have been implemented throughout

2023. In view of the planned entry into force of the new Financial Regulation (FR) in autumn 2024, an analysis will be carried out to identify, whether the IFR need to be revised.

3.4 Budget planning, execution and monitoring

The CoR is a political body with a focussed mission. Its budget appropriations are included entirely under Administrative Heading 7 of the EU-budget (MFF (Multiannual Financial Framework) 2021-2027). The CoR has no spending-oriented programmes of the type the EC manages under other headings of the EU-budget.

The CoR applies a coherent political and supportive administrative system of budgeting, planning, execution and monitoring supporting the realisation of the CoR's political and administrative objectives. The performance-oriented system works principally as follows:

- The CoR's President, after having obtained advice from the CoR's Conference of Presidents, presents guidelines for establishment of the CoR's draft budget to the CoR's Bureau for adoption.
- The CoR's draft budget, with appropriations allocated with a view to reach the political and administrative objectives, is established by the CoR's Secretary-General based upon the adopted CoR Bureau guidelines.
- The draft budget is then vetted and approved by the CoR Member-driven Commission of Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA), then submitted to the CoR's Bureau and to the CoR's Plenary Session for adoption. In this way, subsequent expenditure is tied to the multi-annual planned objectives, actions and political priorities of the CoR Presidencies.
- Once the Budget Authority has adopted the CoR's budget for a given year, the appropriations for its activities are subject to a budget planning adopted at the beginning of the budget implementation year.
- The CoR's planning instructions established by the Secretary-General based upon the CoR's political and administrative priorities require that the final appropriations for every budget line be linked to at least one action defined in the planning and there are requirements for establishment of indicators to measure implementation.
- The planning for a given year is executed by sub-delegated Authorising Officers empowered to that function by the CoR's Secretary-General, acting in his capacity as Authorising Officer by Delegation (AOD). Individual nominations are made by updating the general decision with coherence of delegations given and ABAC accesses granted.
- Prior to a specific actual budget implementation decision on what in detail the CoR will do in the specific political circumstances, the CoR puts together proposals with estimates of how much appropriation are needed from various budget lines. The proposals are then scrutinised / followed up on by the CFAA.

3.5 Financial initiation and verification

In 2023, the financial verification service verified 19,571 transactions (salaries excluded) out of which 4,536 transactions have been subject to merely technical ex ante validation (in the framework of the simplified approval workflow). This represents an overall increase of 9% of files submitted by the operational services in 2023 compared to 17,994 in 2022 and an increase of 14% compared to the pre-pandemic year

The financial circuits applied in the CoR's budget implementation are established respecting the following principles and rules as outlined by the CoR's Internal Financial Rules:

- Segregation of duties between initiation, verification, authorisation and payment.
- Codification of the operational and financial responsibilities.
- Centralised financial initiation and ex-ante verification (see section 3.5). Trained actors (delegations are given based upon followed training).

The monitoring of the CoR budget execution is carried out at several levels:

- Regular monitoring of budget execution is required to be established and implemented by managing services to steer operations for budget lines falling under their responsibility and management.
- An analytical tool for monitoring the budget execution, "Budget Watch", is used to centrally monitor the execution (commitments and payments) of all budget lines and sub-lines for C1, C4, C5, C8 and C9 appropriations. This tool in combination with quarterly in-depth budget execution reviews (spring, summer and autumn editions) supports the identification of possible over- and under-spending at an early stage. Based on this tool, monthly budget execution notes are prepared and circulated to the Directorates' and financial actors of the CoR.
- Progress of the overall budget execution and that of politically important budget lines is regularly monitored by the CoR CFAA.
- Estimates of the execution of salaries' related budget lines, covering more than 60% of the CoR total budget, are carried out/updated each month.

In order to better prepare for the possible reallocation of appropriations, when conditions merit and opportunities exist, quarterly budget execution in-depth reviews are coordinated centrally but carried out by the CoR Authorising Officers by sub-delegation, per Directorate and for all CoR budget lines. This contributes to the optimisation of the budget execution through a better reallocation of resources, including via transfers of appropriations if and when possible and necessary during the budget implementation year.

The CoR continuously remains open to assess if implementation of practices developed and tried with a successful result in other EU Institutions of a similar size and with a similar political representation would result in an improvement of the CoR's political decision-making process.

2019 (17,152 transactions). These entail a large variety of files: budgetary commitments and legal commitments, payment orders, recovery orders, recruitment decisions, establishment or modification of statutory rights, promotions, etc.

In 2023, 655CoR and EESC transactions out of a total of 19,571 (compared to 671 out of a total of 17,994 in 2022)

verified by the financial verification service were either refused for correction (557) or were the subject of financial exception reports or negative opinions from the financial verification service (98 files). This represents an average monthly refusal/correction rate of 3.3% (slightly lower

than the 3.7% in 2022). The financial verification service has also a counselling role and is in a permanent dialogue with financial actors with a view to constantly improving financial management.

3.6 Ex-post control

Aiming at simplifying and at aligning the approach to the practice of the other EU Institutions, the ex post control methodology has been revised. The 2023 ex post control was carried out based on the new methodology.

In order to increase the efficiency of control, instead of the prior decentralised practice, the ex post controls are now centrally organised, with the following improvements:

- The focus of the ex post controls is on financial transactions (instead of the former controls' focus on managerial and operational issues);
- Strengthened underlying risk analysis (covering different budget areas over the years);

- Alignment of the reference period to the financial year.

The sample of transactions subject to the ex post is selected based on the statistical sampling method, the so called «Monetary Unit Sampling» (MUS), in order to provide reasonable assurance on the budget management and on an estimated level of error rate for the reference population.

The standard budget area, as defined in the methodology, is salary related payments in individual payslips (one stratum).

Based on the risk analysis, within the standard budget area, the 2023 ex post controls focused on the basic salary (grade, step) and the time worked.

Scope ex post control	Number of files verified	Total amount of reference population verified (million EUR)
Basic salary and time worked	55	67

The budget subject of the 2023 ex post control is 58%.

In conclusion, based on the ex post control carried out on the representative sample, the statistical estimate of the error affecting the reference population is 0%. Consequently, the controls put in place are considered effective.

3.7 Exception reports

For reporting purposes, an exception (administrative or financial) occurs when there is non-compliance with established rules and procedures detected and approved ex ante.

Financial exceptions regarding transactions with an amount involved above 1,000 € or not known in advance are submitted to the AOD for approval. Financial exceptions relating to transactions with an amount involved less or equal to 1,000 € are approved at the level of the AOS. The AOD is informed on a quarterly basis of the exceptions initiated.

Financial exceptions

The overall number of financial exception reports decreased compared with financial exception reports registered in 2022. Moreover, the transactions subject to a financial exception report concern a very small proportion of the total number of financial transactions (salaries excluded) and halved compared with the previous year: 0.13% in 2023 and 0.24% in 2022.

The CoR maintains a central register of exceptions and monitors the follow-up of the remedial measures identified therein

in the newly developed Monitoring Tool (see objective 11 under section 2, Directorate E). The reporting on exceptions is an important element of assurance for the AOD when drafting his declaration of assurance.

All authorising officers by sub-delegation (AOS) report to the AOD on financial exceptions and remedial measures when presenting their declarations of assurance for the budget lines for which they are responsible.

For the 2023 exercise all AOSs have signed their individual declarations of assurance (also see Annex 2). All exceptions reports in the central register are mentioned in the relevant declarations of assurance and corrective measures are being implemented and monitored to prevent these exceptions from reoccurring.

Administrative exceptions

Three administrative exception reports were registered for non-compliance with internal procedures and corrective measures are being implemented to prevent this type of exception from reoccurring.

3.8 Cost-effectiveness of controls

The budget of the CoR is a purely administrative budget for a political assembly. When deploying controls, the

CoR seeks not only to avoid possible financial losses but also to mitigate reputational risks related to possible

non-compliance with regulatory provisions. Therefore, the costs and benefits of controls cannot be appreciated merely in monetary terms but need also to be considered from a political angle.

Given that ex-post controls did not identify any major issues (*c.f. point 3.6 above*), that financial exceptions were detected prior to validation of the expenditure (*c.f. point 3.5 above*) and that there are no ongoing litigations related to procurement decisions, CoR considers its controls to be effective.

Yet, considering that CoR has reached a high level of organisational maturity, and as article 74(2) FR demands that internal control measures should take into account their cost effectiveness, a cost-effectiveness of the internal control environment and planning & reporting cycle in place at CoR was carried out in 2020, with the help of an external expert and in close association with key internal stakeholders. The goal of the analysis was to simplify, modernise and/or find synergies of processes without jeopardising an adequate internal control environment and to explore possible ways to further enhance the purposefulness of the CoR planning & reporting cycle, to increase its added-value and to align it in an optimal manner to the mission, means and risks of the institution.

In 2021, on the basis of the external expert's report, the ICS working group proposed a multi-annual action plan for a

3.9 Public procurement

The sector dedicated to the management of CoR's procurement procedures for contracts with a value equal to or greater than EUR 15.000 launched by the CoR Own Services has been operational since January 2016. A similar specialised procurement service assists operational services of the Joint Services when they launch tender procedures on behalf of the CoR. The working arrangements and the allocation of responsibilities between the CoR's public procurement sector and organising departments are defined in service instruction n°04/2019. In 2021 the procurement Sector has initiated its digitisation with the

3.10 Internal audit function

The monitoring of the internal audit function is provided by the Audit Committee composed of one member per political group of the CoR Commission of Financial and Administrative Affairs and one high-level external advisor. In 2023, the Audit Committee held two meetings where internal audit matters were presented such as the 2022 annual internal audit report, the 2024 audit work program, the audit progress report and the IAS quality assurance and improvement program. In addition, preparation for the implementation of the new global internal audit standards has been discussed.

In 2023, the audit on performance of the IT organisation in Joint Services was finalised. Based on its findings, this audit report formulated 11 recommendations consisting of decisions, procedures, analysis and guidelines. Furthermore, the audit on data protection was carried out. The related validation process started at the end of the year.

gradual revision and simplification of the existing internal control environment. The action plan included a series of further improvements to the planning & reporting cycle, the so called "Project Convergence". It aims at providing a consistent framework to simplify the Planning and Reporting, Risk Management, Annual Impact Report and Business Continuity instruments and other Internal Control elements, making them more strategic, instilled by the mission and political priorities of the CoR and coherent amongst themselves, using a common terminology and better allowing the monitoring and reporting on the CoR's performance and impact. Most of the processes entailed in the project were reviewed and simplified during 2022 and the last two, the Annual Activity Report and Business Continuity have been finalised in 2023. The new methodology has been successfully implemented for each one of the processes' first exercise.

In 2023, the development of the Convergence platform has continued in order to enable the implementation of the Project Convergence: a SharePoint based tool for planning, reporting, risk assessment, business continuity and some aspects of Internal Control. It includes a Monitoring Tool that allows the follow up, in the same tool, of punctual actions derived from the Annual Operational Working Plan objectives, of mitigating measures to tackle identified risks and mitigating measures for the exceptions. Further improvements have been done to ensure the platform's optimisation and the secure management of inter-annual data.

introduction of eSubmission, a tool that allows for digital submission of tenders, for open and restricted procedures above Directive threshold (i.e. for a value equal or greater than 143.000 EUR). In early 2022, the sector's digitisation has been further extended with the introduction of eSubmission for low and middle value negotiated procedures below Directive threshold. In 2023, the digitisation has extended to a further step in the procurement process, with the introduction of the QES (Qualified electronic signature) for the signature of contracts.

4. STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Following the Bureau recommendations from the Action Plan on **Taking forward the May 2023 Gender Equality** (COR-2023-03071-10-01-NB-TRA), the CoR is including a specific chapter on the achievements of the Strategy for Gender Equality at the CoR.

Under the guidance of the CoP, the Bureau adopted in May 2023 the strategy *Towards Gender Equality in the CoR*. After consultation of the National Delegations, in October 2023 the Bureau adopted *Taking forward the May 2023 Gender Equality* Action Plan. The goal is to achieve gender equality in CoR's political work, leading positions and membership through concrete actions, in the short, medium and long term, also in view of the new mandate. In November 2023, a Bureau Rapporteur was appointed to follow the implementation of the action plan.

A paragraph drawing attention to the CoR Gender Balance Strategy is included in each of the letters sent by the Sec-

retary-General to the Secretary-General of the Council informing of a vacancy to be filled, and asking to initiate the corresponding decision-making procedure.

During 2023, the CoR continued to target gender equality in the panels of statutory meetings and plenary sessions of the CoR as well as panels at conferences and all events held by the CoR or on its premises. In addition, the CoR ad hoc commission on the revision of the Rules of Procedure integrated in its mandate *"to strengthen the CoR's role and improve its functioning, in particular (...) improving the gender equality"*.

The One-Stop Shop has been informing the national delegations with the latest figures regarding gender balance since November 2023.

The details for the administrative achievements/actions in this area are included under the Objective 15.

5. ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

Taking into account the conclusions of the review of the elements supporting assurance, it is possible to conclude that the internal controls systems implemented by the European Committee of the Regions provide sufficient assurance to adequately manage the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. Furthermore, it is also possible to conclude that the internal control systems provide sufficient assurance with regards to the achievement of the other internal control objectives.

6. THE DECLARATION OF ASSURANCE

I, Petr Blížkovský, Secretary-General of the European Committee of the Regions, in my capacity as authorising officer by delegation,

declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view,

state that I have a reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in this report have been used for the purposes intended in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and that the control procedures put in place provide satisfactory guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of the Internal Control self-assessment, the ex-post controls, the work of the internal auditor, and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

I confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported which could harm the interests of the institution.

Done at Brussels,

Petr Blížkovský



7. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Financial resources

Annex 2: Declarations of the Authorising Officers by sub-delegation (table of names and date of signature)

Annex 3: Transfers of appropriations

Annex 4: Negotiated procedures 2023

Annex 5: Report on compliance of the time limits suspension

Annex 6: Provisional annual accounts 2023

Annex 7: Human resources table

Annex 8: Building policy

Annex 9: Activities of the Members of the CoR in 2023

Annex 10: Follow-up to the discharge resolution

7.1 ANNEX 1: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Total 2023 approved budget of the European Committee of the Regions («CoR») was € 116.7 million, including the Amending Budget 4/2023 – salary and energy related (6.1% more than the final budget of 2022).

€ 116.6 million (99.9%) of all appropriations has been committed by the end of 2023 and € 106.5 million (91.2%) has been paid.

1 Use of resources

Commitments in 2023

At the end of the year, the percentage committed from the approved budget was 99.9%.

The commitment execution rate for Title 1 «Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution» was 99.9% as well as for Title 2 «Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure».

€ 0.1 million (or 0.1%) of all C1 credits was uncommitted at the end of the year and thus was returned back to the EU budget. Both, in relative and monetary terms, this was less than in 2022 where € 0.87 million (or 0.8%) was left uncommitted in C1 credits.

Payments in 2023

The overall execution rate for payments was 91.2%. This is the highest result observed in the CoR history. The payment execution rate was 88.0% in 2022 and 85.1% in 2021.

It should be noted that the actual payment execution rate for 2023 will only be known by the end of 2024 when the final payment execution rate of C8 credits of 2024 will be determined.

The final payment execution rate at the end of the budget cycle will be notably higher and ideally shall approach the commitment execution rate, as part of the committed credits relat-

ed to 2023 was carried forward to C8 credits of 2024 and most of it shall be paid in 2024.

Title 1: Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution

In this title, most of the payments relate to staff remunerations. For Chapter 12, the total final budget amounted to € 63.9 million of which 63.9 million (100.0%) was paid in 2023. This is more in monetary and in percentage terms than in 2022, when € 60.0 million (99.8%) was paid out.

In 2023, the amount of € 8.0 million (90.4%) was paid from the budget item 1004 «Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure». This is considerably more in monetary and in percentage terms than in 2022 (€ 6.6 million and 80.6% respectively).

Title 2: Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure

In total, 76.4 % of the Title 2 budget was paid out in 2023, principally due to the 93.7% payment execution rate of chapter 20 «Buildings and associated costs». The other chapters of Title 2 showed lower payment execution rates.

Comparison with the previous years

The following table gives a comparative overview of execution rates for commitments and payments per title, for the years 2023, 2022 and 2021.

	2023			2022			2021		
	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments	Budget 000 €	Commitments	Payments
Title 1	85,747	99.9%	96.6%	79,098	99.2%	95.2%	72,213	98.8%	93.0%
Title 2	30,928	99.9%	76.4%	30,879	99.2%	69.5%	34,528	99.2%	68.6%
Total	116,675	99.9%	91.2%	109,977	99.2%	88.0%	106,741	98.9%	85.1%

Title 1: Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution

The execution rate for commitments in 2023 was at the higher level than in 2022 and in 2021. The 2023 payment execution rate was also higher than in 2022 and in 2021, mainly due to 100.0% payment execution rate for Chapter 12 «Officials and temporary staff».

Title 2: Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure

The execution rate for commitments in 2023 was higher than in 2022 and 2021. The payment execution rate was

notably higher than in 2022 and 2021. This was mainly due to better commitment but especially much better payment execution rates in chapters 20 «Buildings and associated costs» (budget lines 2007 «Fitting out of premises», 2022 «Cleaning and maintenance», 2024 «Energy consumption» and 2028 «Insurance») and 26 «Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution» (budget lines 2600 «Relationship with press and audio-visual support», 2622 «Documentation and library expenditure», 2624 «Expenditure on archive resources» and 264 «Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions»).

2 Implementation of the budget

Current year appropriations (C1 Credits)

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
10	Members of the institution	8,990,750	8,990,750	100.0%	8,083,058	89.9%
1000	Office expenses of Members	159,236	159,236	100.0%	121,262	76.2%
1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	8,801,514	8,801,514	100.0%	7,955,968	90.4%
105	Courses for Members of the institution	30,000	30,000	100.0%	5,829	19.4%
12	Officials and temporary staff	63,934,684	63,916,911	100.0%	63,916,911	100.0%
1200	Remuneration and allowances	63,431,799	63,421,102	100.0%	63,421,102	100.0%
1202	Paid overtime	29,787	29,382	98.6%	29,382	98.6%
1204	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	227,308	226,973	99.9%	226,973	99.9%
1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	245,790	239,454	97.4%	239,454	97.4%
14	Other staff and external services	11,037,346	11,002,227	99.7%	9,326,300	84.5%
1400	Other staff	4,801,800	4,793,899	99.8%	4,728,833	98.5%
1402	Interpreting services	4,167,080	4,167,080	100.0%	2,803,897	67.3%
1404	Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	1,037,242	1,032,725	99.6%	1,020,293	98.4%
1408	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service and other expenditure for services to staff during their career	45,700	45,600	99.8%	45,600	99.8%
1420	Supplementary services for the translation service and translation and outsourcing-related tools	607,524	584,924	96.3%	465,771	76.7%
1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work	378,000	378,000	100.0%	261,906	69.3%
16	Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	1,783,955	1,771,377	99.3%	1,487,996	83.4%
1610	Miscellaneous expenditure on recruitment	8,006	5,678	70.9%	4,952	61.9%
1612	Further training, retraining and information for staff	390,000	387,639	99.4%	319,646	82.0%
162	Missions	420,833	420,833	100.0%	335,387	79.7%
1630	Social welfare	9,841	9,841	100.0%	4,862	49.4%
1632	Internal social policy	32,000	31,398	98.1%	28,265	88.3%
1633	Sustainable staff commuting	37,370	32,500	87.0%	11,953	32.0%
1634	Medical service	135,905	133,488	98.2%	80,372	59.1%
1636	Restaurants and canteens	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1638	Early Childhood Centre and approved day nurseries	750,000	750,000	100.0%	702,559	93.7%
20	Buildings and associated costs	18,593,643	18,573,441	99.9%	17,425,992	93.7%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
2000	Rent	767,894	755,087	98.3%	702,444	91.5%
2001	Annual lease payments	11,313,989	11,313,989	100.0%	11,313,989	100.0%
2003	Acquisition of immovable property	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2007	Fitting-out of premises	1,209,704	1,209,704	100.0%	1,200,178	99.2%
2008	Other expenditure on buildings	111,593	111,593	100.0%	1,654	1.5%
2022	Cleaning and maintenance	2,432,667	2,432,666	100.0%	1,640,853	67.5%
2024	Energy consumption	794,132	794,132	100.0%	615,779	77.5%
2026	Security and surveillance of buildings	1,891,021	1,883,627	99.6%	1,880,011	99.4%
2028	Insurance	72,643	72,643	100.0%	71,084	97.9%
21	Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	7,370,987	7,361,880	99.9%	3,873,442	52.5%
2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	1,938,047	1,937,704	100.0%	1,576,121	81.3%
2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems	3,707,937	3,706,885	100.0%	1,436,736	38.7%
2103	Telecommunications	94,722	94,721	100.0%	94,721	100.0%
212	Furniture	128,910	128,680	99.8%	60,060	46.6%
214	Technical equipment and installations	1,438,394	1,436,215	99.8%	658,816	45.8%
216	Vehicles	62,977	57,675	91.6%	46,986	74.6%
23	Administrative expenditure	297,591	295,991	99.5%	207,612	69.8%
230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	72,163	71,725	99.4%	70,008	97.0%
231	Financial charges	500	500	100.0%	239	47.9%
232	Legal costs and damages	30,000	30,000	100.0%		0.0%
236	Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	35,860	34,859	97.2%	10,458	29.2%
238	Other administrative expenditure	99,456	99,294	99.8%	67,296	67.7%
239	EMAS ³⁴ activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme	59,612	59,612	100.0%	59,612	100.0%
25	Meetings and conferences	621,442	616,670	99.2%	338,366	54.4%
2540	Costs of meetings organised in Brussels	156,903	153,395	97.8%	111,083	70.8%
2541	Third parties	311,504	311,504	100.0%	143,017	45.9%
2546	Representation expenses	153,035	151,770	99.2%	84,267	55.1%
26	Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution	4,044,994	4,039,871	99.9%	1,798,497	44.5%
2600	Relationships with press and audio-visual support	985,109	984,125	99.9%	474,778	48.2%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
2601	Permanent dialogue mechanism	812,512	812,512	100.0%	200,644	24.7%
2602	Digital content and social media	1,025,286	1,025,285	100.0%	427,274	41.7%
2604	Official Journal	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2620	External expertise, studies, policy monitoring and reporting	479,176	477,100	99.6%	112,750	23.5%
2622	Documentation and library expenditure	218,987	217,209	99.2%	212,780	97.2%
2624	Expenditure on archive resources	140,690	140,650	100.0%	116,487	82.8%
264	Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions	383,234	382,989	99.9%	253,784	66.2%
Total Budget:		116,675,392	116,569,118	99.9%	106,458,175	91.2%

Appropriations carried over from 2022 to 2023 (C8 appropriations of 2023)

The appropriations committed in 2022 but not yet paid out by the end of that year, were carried forward and converted into C8 appropriations of 2023. In total, € 12.6 million – or 11.5% of the CoR's 2022 budget – was transferred into C8 appropriations at the beginning of 2023. This amount was mainly derived from C1 appropriations of 2022.

The total amount of C8 appropriations carried forward from 2022 to 2023 was lower in monetary and percentage terms compared to the previous year when € 15.0 million was carried forward to 2022 (or 14.1% of the CoR's 2021 budget).

The following table gives a summary per title of the carried forward appropriations from 2022 to 2023 (C8).

	Budget (€)	Commitments	Payments
Title 1	3,183,694	94.0%	82.3%
Title 2	9,395,160	98.2%	85.9%
Total	12,578,853	97.1%	85.0%

The execution rate for C8 appropriations of 2023 was 85.0%. In total € 10.7 million was paid out during this year. This is more than the execution level of 2022 (81.6%).

As a consequence, € 1.9 million or 15.0% of C8 appropriations of 2023 was left unused and returned back to the EU budget at the end of 2023.

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
10	Members of the institution	1,632,529	1,616,230	99.0%	1,382,856	84.7%
1000	Office expenses of Members	47,370	35,814	75.6%	35,814	75.6%
1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	1,571,860	1,571,860	100.0%	1,338,486	85.2%
105	Courses for Members of the institution	13,299	8,556	64.3%	8,556	64.3%
12	Officials and temporary staff	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1200	Remuneration and allowances	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1202	Paid overtime	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1204	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	0	0	N/A	0	N/A

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
14	Other staff and external services	1,247,289	1,177,611	94.4%	1,045,176	83.8%
1400	Other staff	163,800	116,746	71.3%	116,746	71.3%
1402	Interpreting services	804,678	798,707	99.3%	787,378	97.9%
1404	Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	11,331	4,162	36.7%	4,162	36.7%
1408	Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service and other expenditure for services to staff during their career	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1420	Supplementary services for the translation service and translation and outsourcing-related tools	112,450	102,965	91.6%	73,953	65.8%
1422	Expert assistance related to consultative work	155,030	155,030	100.0%	62,936	40.6%
16	Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	303,875	197,571	65.0%	193,647	63.7%
1610	Miscellaneous expenditure on recruitment	13,756	11,819	85.9%	11,819	85.9%
1612	Further training, retraining and information for staff	61,182	56,208	91.9%	56,208	91.9%
162	Missions	83,208	50,227	60.4%	50,227	60.4%
1630	Social welfare	3,858	445	11.5%	445	11.5%
1632	Internal social policy	3,340	3,328	99.7%	2,842	85.1%
1633	Sustainable staff commuting	33,414	22,516	67.4%	19,691	58.9%
1634	Medical service	54,402	34,981	64.3%	34,367	63.2%
1636	Restaurants and canteens	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
1638	Early Childhood Centre and approved day nurseries	50,716	18,047	35.6%	18,047	35.6%
20	Buildings and associated costs	3,374,247	3,329,336	98.7%	2,339,086	69.3%
2000	Rent	24,421	22,161	90.7%	16,353	67.0%
2001	Annual lease payments	10,916	10,916	100.0%	8,309	76.1%
2003	Acquisition of immovable property	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2007	Fitting-out of premises	626,912	626,728	100.0%	118,714	18.9%
2008	Other expenditure on buildings	553	331	59.9%	331	59.9%
2022	Cleaning and maintenance	1,747,311	1,708,363	97.8%	1,291,258	73.9%
2024	Energy consumption	938,922	938,922	100.0%	882,206	94.0%
2026	Security and surveillance of buildings	15,238	13,633	89.5%	13,633	89.5%
2028	Insurance	9,973	8,282	83.0%	8,282	83.0%
21	Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	3,528,404	3,504,298	99.3%	3,489,662	98.9%
2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	428,217	425,072	99.3%	425,072	99.3%

Ch. / Item	Description	Budget [a]	Commit. [b]	% [b/a]	Payments [c]	% [c/a]
2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems	2,541,491	2,522,628	99.3%	2,522,628	99.3%
2103	Telecommunications	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
212	Furniture	111,181	111,181	100.0%	111,181	100.0%
214	Technical equipment and installations	444,931	444,038	99.8%	429,402	96.5%
216	Vehicles	2,583	1,378	53.4%	1,378	53.4%
23	Administrative expenditure	298,534	272,247	91.2%	235,695	79.0%
230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	97,694	96,694	99.0%	95,848	98.1%
231	Financial charges	1,349	39	2.9%	39	2.9%
232	Legal costs and damages	28,075	5,670	20.2%	5,670	20.2%
236	Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	38,730	38,730	100.0%	5,429	14.0%
238	Other administrative expenditure	45,140	43,567	96.5%	41,164	91.2%
239	EMAS activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme	87,546	87,546	100.0%	87,546	100.0%
25	Meetings and conferences	272,212	225,292	82.8%	111,713	41.0%
2540	Costs of meetings organised in Brussels	61,805	60,479	97.9%	28,427	46.0%
2541	Third parties	133,743	133,743	100.0%	52,217	39.0%
2546	Representation expenses	76,664	31,070	40.5%	31,070	40.5%
26	Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and distribution	1,921,763	1,896,630	98.7%	1,896,425	98.7%
2600	Relationships with press and audio-visual support	538,397	532,315	98.9%	532,315	98.9%
2601	Permanent dialogue mechanism	313,760	313,760	100.0%	313,760	100.0%
2602	Digital content and social media	589,585	586,018	99.4%	586,018	99.4%
2604	Official Journal	0	0	N/A	0	N/A
2620	External expertise, studies, policy monitoring and reporting	201,700	201,700	100.0%	201,700	100.0%
2622	Documentation and library expenditure	22,688	20,878	92.0%	20,878	92.0%
2624	Expenditure on archive resources	60,780	60,779	100.0%	60,574	99.7%
264	Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions	194,854	181,180	93.0%	181,180	93.0%
Total Budget:		12,578,853	12,219,214	97.1%	10,694,260	85.0%

7.2 ANNEX 2 - Declarations of the Authorising Officers by sub-delegation

According to the European Committee of the Regions' Charter of Missions and Responsibilities of the Authorising Officer by delegation and the Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation (AOS), the latter have, inter alia, a responsibility to contribute to the establishment of the annual report of the Authorising Officer by Delegation through their reporting on the activities for which they have received sub-delegation. On top of the regular reporting, the Authorising Officer by Delegation, in preparing the declaration in his annual report for the year 2023 asked the Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation to report on the control environment for which they are responsible and to sign a declaration in the same format as his, as indicated below. Every AOS had to report on individual exceptions and applied remedial measures to the Authorising Officer by Delegation when presenting his/her declaration of assurance for the budget lines for which his/her is responsible.

For the budget exercise 2023, 48 officials appointed as Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation authorised transactions.

Authorising officers by Sub-delegation:	Declaration(s) signed on:
Bachotet Sophie	08 January 2024
Barber Ian	20 March 2024
Beljaars-Verhoeven Saskia	31 January 2024
Bouquerel Caroline	21 December 2023
Bravo Casado Elena	22 December 2023
Canoto Argüelles Juan Carlos	05 February 2024
Caruso Paola	15 January 2024
Cercone Michele	08 January 2024
Collins Michael	22 December 2023
Da Luz Cintia	20 March 2024
De Brier Yves	20 March 2024
De Schrijver Patrick	14 February 2024
De Schuiteneer Bart	22 December 2023
Essender Boris	15 January 2024
Feral Pierre-Alexis	04 February 2024
Fernandez Esteban Marisa	01 March 2024
Filipek Francois	03 January 2023
Firmin Thierry	03 January 2023
Gnan Reinhold	21 December 2023
Haenebalcke Tom	31 January 2024
Hoffman Tamara	31 January 2024
Janicaud Benjamin	22 December 2023
Jones Chris	20 March 2024
Jouppi Miia	15 February 2024
Kaduczak Joanna	25 January 2024
Kienel Christof	08 January 2024
Kranjc Marko	28 February 2024
Kuby Bert	01 March 2024
Kronbergs Elmars	23 February 2024
Kudlinska Agnieszka	09 January 2024
Ladriere Etienne	14 February 2024
Ladwig Achim	09 January 2024
Lamour Michael	02 April 2024
Lavigne Eric	04 January 2024
Mitelman Anna	20 March 2024

Mokhtari Rachida	22 March 2024
Nardi Serafino	09 January 2024
Neascu Milika	26 January 2024
Pankova Katia	03 April 2024
Strautina Ineta	03 January 2024
Suciu Serban	01 March 2024
Suja Goffin Isabelle	31 January 2024
Taulegne Beatrice	22 December 2023
Toenshoff Silke	21 December 2023
Tsirimiagos Kyriakos	22 December 2023
Van Hoeymissen Dimitri	22 December 2023
Vekemans Tom	12 December 2023

7.3 ANNEX 3 - Transfers of appropriations

Six external transfers of appropriations have been prepared by the CoR and approved by the Budget Authority in 2023:

INF 1/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR intended to reinforce 3 budget lines, namely:

- **1612 “Further training, retraining and information for staff”** with € 60,000;
- **2001 “Annual lease payments”** with € 705,000;
- **2100 “Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work”** with € 40,000.

For budget line 2001 “Annual lease payments” - this was joint CoR/EESC expenditure for which the CoR was paying its share of the joint cost.

The total amount of the transfer was, thus, € 805,000.

INF 2/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR intended to reinforce 2 budget lines, namely:

- **162 “Missions”** with € 50,000;
- **239 “EMAS activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme”** with € 34,212.

For budget line 239 “EMAS activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme” - this was a joint CoR/EESC expenditure for which the CoR was paying its share of the joint cost.

The total amount of the transfer was, thus, € 84,212.

INF 3/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR intended to reinforce budget line **214 “Technical equipment and installations”** with € 115,788. The reinforcement of this line was needed in order to allow the CoR to continue to gradually upgrade/renovate its meeting rooms.

INF 4/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR intended to reinforce budget line **2026 “Security and surveillance of buildings”** with € 15,000 in order to ensure security-related services during the “European Week of the Regions” and the last Plenary sessions of 2023.

INF 5/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR reinforced 3 budget lines, namely:

- **1404 “Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials”** with € 28,000;
- **2007 “Fitting-out of premises”** with € 240,500;
- **2102 “Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems”** with € 46,124.

The total amount of the transfer was thus, € 314,624.

DEC 1/2023

With this transfer of appropriations the CoR reinforced 4 budget lines, namely:

- **214 “Technical equipment”** with € 50,000;
- **2600 “Relationships with press and audio-visual support”** with € 100,000;
- **2601 “Permanent dialogue mechanism”** with € 200,000;
- **2602 “Web and social media and print material”** with € 175,000.

The total amount of the transfer is thus, € 525,000.

Additional funding would permit financing part of the cost of the organization of the CoR Summit of Regions and Cities planned in Belgium in the first half of 2024.

List of executed external transfers (following the authorization of the Budget Authority)

Number	Item	Description	Amount
INF 1	1200	Remuneration and allowances	-805,000
	2001	Annual lease payments - JS	705,000
	2100	Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work - OS - finance	40,000
	1612	Further training, retraining and information for staff	60,000
Total			0
INF 2	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-84,212
	162	Missions	50,000

Number	Item	Description	Amount
	239	EMAS activities, including promotion, and carbon offsetting scheme	34,212
		Total	0
INF 3	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-115,788
	214	Technical equipment and installations - meetings	115,788
		Total	0
INF 4	1400	Other staff - Contractual agents	-15,000
	2026	Security and surveillance of buildings - OS	15,000
		Total	0
INF 5	1422	Expert assistance relating to consultative work - experts	-42,000
	1630	Social welfare	-559
	1633	Sustainable staff commuting	-20,130
	1634	Medical service	-1,620
	214	Technical equipment and installations - JS - catering	-20,438
	214	Technical equipment and installations - JS - printing	-28,584
	216	Vehicles	-3,174
	230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables - JS - printing	-35,968
	230	Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables - OS - meetings	-3,000
	238	Other administrative expenditure - OS - clothes	-5,234
	238	Other administrative expenditure - JS - infrastructure	-36,193
	2546	Representation expenses - protocol	-4,690
	1420	Supplementary services for the translation service and translation and outsourcing-related tools	-67,400
	1610	Miscellaneous expenditure on recruitment	-11,994
	231	Financial charges	-1,000
	236	Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	-19,640
	264	Communication activities of the political groups of the European Committee of the Regions	-13,000
	1404	Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	28,000
	2007	Fitting-out of premises - JS	240,500
	2102	Outside assistance for the operation, development and maintenance of software systems - JS - IT	46,124
		Total	0
DEC 1	1004	Travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure	-200,000
	1220	Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	-110,000
	1400	Other staff - Contractual agents	-215,000
	214	Technical equipment and installations - meetings	50,000

Number	Item	Description	Amount
	2602	Digital content and social media	175,000
	2600	Relationship with press and audio-visual support	100,000
	2601	Permanent dialogue mechanism	200,000
		Total	0

7.4 ANNEX 4 - Negotiated procedures 2023

The present appendix shows, in accordance with article 74(10) FR, the list of procedures awarded in 2023 by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) under negotiated procedures in accordance with points (a) to (f) of point 11.1 and point 39 of Annex I to FR. The data is extracted from ABAC Legal Commitment Kernel by means of Business Intelligence reports.

Procedure Local Key	Original Procedure Local Key	Contractor LE Name	Procedure Results to Framework Contract(s) (Y/N)	User Reference	Procedure Negotiated Type/ Legal Basis Desc	FW Contractor LE Name List	FW Local Key (Root)	FW In Force From Date	FW Expiry Date	Procedure Lot Award Date	Procedure Lot Awarded Amount (Eur)
CDR287	CDR34		Y	Multiple framework contract for the organisation and management of events for the European Committee of the Regions - increase of the ceiling amount for CDR34 (CDR-COM-45-2019-1)	Annex 1 - 11.1 (e) - New services/works consisting in the repetition of similar services/works	1/PRAC SIS 2/MCI BENE LUX	CDR227 CDR230	12-04-2023 21-02-2023	17-03-2025 17-03-2025	20-01-2023	3.000.000,00
CDR305		COMPASS GROUP BELGIUM SA*	N	Catering for Plenary Session on 5-6 July 2023	Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market					27-06-2023	5397,32
CDR307		NIMBLERR	N	Service de captation video pour la session plenièrè du CdR au PE 5-6 juillet 2023	Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market					28-06-2023	8318,78
CDR308		NIMBLERR	N	Service captation conférence pour la session d'ouverture de la EURÉGIONSWEEK dans l'hémicycle du PE, Bruxelles le 9 octobre 2023	Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market					05-07-2023	2.272,89
CDR343		NIMBLERR	N	Service de captation video pour la session plenièrè du CdR au PE 29-10 Novembre 2023	Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market					14-11-2023	8.318,78
CDR355		ICLEI - LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY EV	N	Rental of a CoR office space at the COP 28 in Dubai for environmental commission - 30/11-12/12/2023	Annex 1 - 11.1 (b) - Artistic/technical reasons or exclusive rights or technical monopoly/ captive market					24-11-2023	20.193,26

7.5 ANNEX 5 – Report on compliance with and suspension of time-limits for payment of the institution's creditors

Article 116 of the Financial Regulation³⁵ (FR) defines the time-limits that should be respected for payments made to the institution's creditors and specify the circumstances in which those creditors paid late are entitled to receive default interest charged to the budget heading from which the principal was paid.

Article 116(6) also lays down the obligation for each institution to submit to the budgetary authority a report on compliance with and the suspension of the time-limits for paying its creditors.

Over the years, the Committee of the Regions has set up different actions to enable the authorising services to improve their performance in relation to payment time limits:

- Close monitoring of the payment deadlines by the accounting officer;
- Regular reports (quarterly and on an ad-hoc basis if needed) addressed to the authorising services on the

follow up of payment deadlines;

- Communication given to members of staff involved in financial transactions;
- Improvement of the workflows;
- Introduction of paperless workflows and electronic invoices.

Moreover, the integrated system of financial and budgetary management ABAC (owned by the Commission and used by the CoR since 1 January 2007) possesses specific functionalities that make possible:

- the real time visualisation by the authorising services of the tracking of invoices and corresponding payments throughout the internal chain of verification and approval;
- the production of specific follow-up or warning reports that integrate the management of suspension of time limits for payment and the automatic calculation of default interest to be paid on any invoices paid late.

The table below presents the evolution of the average time taken for payments and the number of days of suspension over the years:

Financial year	Commercial invoices paid		Average time taken for payment (in days)	Number of suspension of time-limits
	Number	Amounts		
2014	1.711	29.238.586	19,72	105
2015	1.790	28.956.837	19,52	96
2016	1.997	31.190.480	26,31	93
2017	2.197	30.642.991	22,71	140
2018	2.452	32.619.280	16,39	96
2019	2.839	32.640.808	17,23	87
2020	2.448	23.403.253	17,21	59
2021	3.629	26.556.036	16,11	84
2022	4.260	29.969.812	17,87	149
2023	5.732	30.490.890	21,88	116

The minimum requirement under the FR is that payments need to be made within 30 days.

The CoR continues its work to take part in the efforts proposed by the Commission in April 2009³⁶ in order to improve the financial situation of undertakings, particularly in this period of crisis.

In 2023 CoR processed and paid the highest ever number of commercial invoices. The number of commercial invoices paid has increased by 35% compared to the pre-

vious year. Therefore, the average time for payment has increased by 4 days.

As far as the automatic payment of default interest is concerned, the analysis of data for the financial year shows that there was one case of payment of mandatory default interest in 2023 for the total of EUR 2.093,44 (case where the amount of default interest exceeds the threshold of EUR 200 defined in Article 116(5) FR).

³⁵ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 193 of 30/07/2018)

³⁶ Communication of the Commission of 8 April 2009 on streamlining financial rules and accelerating budget implementation to help economic recovery (SEC (2009) 477 final).

7.6 ANNEX 6 - Provisional Annual Accounts 2023

BALANCE SHEET

EUR

	Note	31.12.2023	31.12.2022
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Intangible assets	2.1	41.346	3.107
Property, plant and equipment	2.2	49.173.800	50.980.794
Exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables		2.858	9.507
		49.218.004	50.993.408
CURRENT ASSETS			
Exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables	2.3	9.492.748	9.185.493
Cash and cash equivalents	2.4	2.693.693	746.501
		12.186.441	9.931.994
TOTAL ASSETS		61.404.445	60.925.403
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Financial liabilities	2.5	-25.897.098	-30.760.955
		-25.897.098	-30.760.955
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Financial liabilities	2.5	-4.863.857	-4.597.343
Payables	2.6	-2.091.089	-2.816.369
Accrued charges and deferred income	2.7	-6.357.832	-6.420.121
		-13.312.779	-13.833.832
TOTAL LIABILITIES		-39.209.877	-44.594.787
NET ASSETS			
Accumulated surplus		16.330.616	12.626.488
Economic result of the year		5.863.953	3.704.128
NET ASSETS		22.194.568	16.330.616

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

EUR

	Note	2023	2022
REVENUE			
Revenue from non-exchange transactions			
Funding from the Commission	3.1	107.380.000	95.700.000
Other revenue	3.1	12.484.745	11.236.878
		119.864.745	106.936.878
Revenue from exchange transactions			
Operations with the consolidated entities	3.2	1.456.335	2.411.515
Finance revenue	3.2	14.075	
Other revenue	3.2	2.485.000	4.519.943
		3.955.411	6.931.458
Total revenue		123.820.156	113.868.336
EXPENSES			
Staff costs	3.3	-69.250.366	-63.826.459
Finance costs	3.4	-4.555.068	-4.124.685
Other expenses	3.5	-44.150.769	-42.213.064
Total expenses		-117.956.203	-110.164.209
ECONOMIC RESULT OF THE YEAR		5.863.953	3.704.128

CASHFLOW STATEMENT

EUR

	2023	2022
Economic result of the year	5.863.953	3.704.1288
Operating activities		
Amortisation and impairments - intangible fixed assets	5.119	3.015
Depreciation and impairments - property, plant and equipment	3.756.240	3.444.065
(Increase)/decrease in exchange receivables and non-exchange recoverables	-300.605	-357.155
Increase/(decrease) in financial liabilities	-4.597.343	-7.450.449
Increase/(decrease) in payables	-725.279	2.450.269
Increase/(decrease) in accrued charges and deferred revenue	-62.288	-1.466.051
Investing activities		
(Increase)/decrease in intangible assets and property, plant and equipment	-1.992.604	-1.163.668
NET CASHFLOW	1.947.192	-835.846
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	1.947.192	-835.846
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	746.501	1.582.346
Cash and cash equivalents at year-end	2.693.693	746.501

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

EUR

	Accumulated Surplus/(Deficit)	Economic result of the year	Net Assets
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2021	13.207.369	-580.881	12.626.488
Allocation 2021 economic result	-580.881	580.881	0
Economic result of the year		3.704.128	3.704.128
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2022	12.626.488	3.704.128	16.330.616
Allocation 2022 economic result	3.704.128	-3.704.128	0
Economic result of the year		5.863.953	5.863.953
BALANCE AS AT 31.12.2023	16.330.616	5.863.953	22.194.568

7.7 ANNEX 7: Human Resources figures of the European Committee of the Regions estimates for 2023 (situation on 01/11/2023)

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan (<i>posts</i>)	307	175	14	496
Contract staff ⁽¹⁾ (<i>people</i>)	30	41	0	71
External contract staff (<i>people</i>)	n/a	n/a	n/a	43
Seconded national experts (<i>people</i>)	14			14
Other personnel (specify) ⁽²⁾ (<i>people</i>)	1			1
Total	352	216	14	625

(1) contract staff replacing absent staff (e.g. maternity leave or short-term assignments) are not included.

(2) medical doctor

President's Cabinet

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	6	3		9
Contract staff	1	1		2
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
COST FREE Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	7	4	0	11

Secretary General's Cabinet

Type	SG	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	1	4	4		9
Contract staff		1			1
External contract staff		n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts		0			
COST FREE Seconded national experts		1			1
Other personnel (specify)					
Total	1	6	4	0	11

EPP Group Secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan*	10	4		14
Contract staff	1	0		1
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
COST FREE Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	11	4	0	15

EA Group Secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	3	1		4
Contract staff				
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	3	1	0	4

PES Group Secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan*	10	4		14
Contract staff	1	1		1
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	11	5	0	16

ECR Group secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	3	1		4
Contract staff	2			2
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	5	1	0	6

Renew Europe Group Secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan *	5	3		8
Contract staff				
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	5	3	0	8

The Greens Group secretariat

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	2	1		3
Contract staff	1			1
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	3	1	0	4

Legal Affairs

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	4	1		5
Contract staff				0
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
COST FREE Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	4	1	0	5

Internal Audit Service

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	3	1		4
Contract staff				
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	3	1	0	4

Directorate A

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	20	24	2	46
Contract staff	1	17		18
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
Seconded national experts	1			1
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	22	41	2	66

Directorate B

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	32	13		45
Contract staff	3	1		4
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Seconded national experts	3			3
Other personnel (specify)				0
Total	38	14	0	52

Directorate C

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	28	9	4	41
Contract staff	3			3
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Seconded national experts	2			2
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	33	9	4	46

Directorate D

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	23	18	2	43
Contract staff	6	5		11
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	11
Seconded national experts	3			3
COST FREE Seconded national experts				0
Other personnel (specify)				0
Total	32	23	2	68

Directorate E

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	21	46	2	69
Contract staff	3	3		6
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	0
Seconded national experts	1			1
COST FREE Seconded national experts	2			2
Special adviser (medical doctor)	1			1
Total	28	49	2	79

Directorate for Translation (CoR staff only)

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	118	20	4	142
Contract staff	1	1		2
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				0
Other personnel (specify)				0
Total	119	21		144

Directorate of Logistics (CoR staff only)

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	5	11		16
Contract staff	1	9		10
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	6	20	0	26

Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology (CoR staff only)

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	8	7		15
Contract staff	6	1		7
External contract staff	n/a	n/a	n/a	31
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total	14	8	0	53

Public Procurement and Financial Management

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan		1		1
Contract staff		1		1
External contract staff				
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total		2		2

Staff Committee

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan		1		1
Contract staff		1		1
External contract staff				
Seconded national experts				
Other personnel (specify)				
Total		2		2

Postes de réserve à assigner

Type	AD	AST	AST/SC	Total
Establishment plan	1	2		3
Total	1	2		3

7.8 Annex 8 : Building Policy



*Joint Services – Directorate for Logistics
The Directors*

Report from the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions to the European Parliament and the Council in accordance with Article 266 of the Financial Regulation

1) Article 266 FR

Each institution shall provide the European Parliament and the Council, by 1 June each year, with a working document on its building policy, which shall incorporate the following information:

- for each building, the expenditure and surface area covered by the appropriations of the corresponding budget lines. The expenditure shall include the costs of the fitting-out of buildings but not other charges;
- the expected evolution of the global programming of surface area and locations for the coming years with a description of the building projects in planning phases which are already identified;
- the final terms and costs, as well as relevant information regarding project implementation of new building projects previously submitted to the European Parliament and to the Council under the procedure set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 and not included in the preceding year's working documents.

2) Part 1: The expenditure and surface area for each building

Information about the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions can be found in the attached table.

3) Part 2: The expected evolution of the global programming

A buildings strategy was approved by the Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee on 17 October 2017 and by the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions on 29 November 2017.

This **buildings strategy** provides a reliable and flexible framework for future decisions in this area and contains a set of guiding principles, which include:

- geographical concentration;
- preference for ownership rather than lease and exercising options to buy;

- sustainable buildings management; and
- multi-annual planning.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONCENTRATION

Regarding the main priority for the buildings' strategy – "geographical concentration" – several scenarios were explored in 2018. The preferred scenarios all include retaining the VMA building (rue Van Maerlant 2) for use by the EESC and the CoR after 2021.

After long negotiations, on 28 August 2019, a new Administrative Agreement was signed by the Director of the OIB and the secretaries-general of both Committees on the exchange of the Committees' B68 (rue Belliard 68) and TRE74 (rue de Trèves 74) buildings for the Commission's VMA building. The exchange became effective on 16 September 2022, the date on which the value of both sets of buildings were identical^[1].

Exchanging the B68 and TRE buildings for the VMA, however, resulted in a significant loss of office space for the two Committees (10 440 m²)^[2], which could not be entirely offset by alternative measures in the short term such as stepping up the office-space density of the other buildings and increasing teleworking.

On 11 December 2019, the European External Action Service (EEAS) informed the Committees that the Belliard 100 building would be available by early 2021 and proposed transferring its current lease to them. With 5 200 m², the Belliard 100 building would enable the Committees to partially offset the loss of office space following the building exchange scheduled for September 2022. In addition, renting the B100 as from 2021 would enable the Committees to accommodate some of the staff vacating the VMA building during the refurbishment works planned in 2022. As the B100 is adjacent to the VMA building, taking over its rental contract will also have the advantage for the Committees of having a fully interconnected, single group of buildings.

Considering these elements, and after having referred the matter to the budgetary authority, the two Committees concluded an agreement with the EEAS in order to take over the rental contract of B100 as from September 2021.

Following the exchange of buildings with the Commission, savings compared to 2019 began to appear from the beginning of 2023, due to the lower cost of renting the entire

VMA compared to the three buildings previously being paid for (B68, T74 and partially the VMA): these savings are sufficient to cover the rent of B100.

With the exchange of the B68 and TRE74 buildings for the VMA building and the taking over of the B100 building from the EEAS in September 2021, the major priority of the 2017 buildings strategy, the “geographical concentration of the buildings”, has been reached. Now all the buildings used by the Committees are physically connected to the JDE building.

REFURBISHMENT OF VMA

The VMA is a more than 35-year-old building. Its office floors from the third to the ninth floor needed to be refurbished in order to function properly in the coming years. After having referred the matter to the Budgetary authority in October 2021, the Committees signed in December 2021 a framework contract as well as the specific contracts for the works for a total amount of 9.54 Mio€, including:

- the main renovation of the office floors, along with new sanitary facilities, showers and lounge area for EESC members;
- three technical options concerning a) the modernisation of the work environment by installing glass partitions; b) setting a flexible layout at all times (reasonable flexibility) so that the spaces can be adapted to new forms of work in smaller or larger, individual or shared, or open offices (post-pandemic phase) at low cost, and c) introducing measures to limit energy and water consumption (EMAS/Green Deal objectives).

During the works, the office floors (3rd to 9th) of the VMA building went through a complete renovation. They were stripped from the very bottom and renovated up to high level standards applying the principles of the New European Bauhaus. The quality of the renovation is state of the art. A great selection of fittings, premium finishes with an attention to details and some gentle touch of colours, conservation of the existing parquet, and the beautiful plant wall which welcomes you on entering each floor.

Offices now have intelligent lighting, heating, ventilation as well as solar protection with the smart glazing on the windows of rue Belliard side. A single device controls all these systems and optimize them taking into account the presence of persons, luminosity, CO² level in the air, sunshine, indoor temperature and temperature chosen. These smart devices are for the first time being installed in Brussels. The benefits of these devices are to optimize the energy consumption while offering a level of comfort to the users that stays stable during the day and through the different seasons. It also shuts down the lights and reduces the pace of functioning of heating and ventilation when there are no users present after a while.

Corridors were fitted with new glass partitions which allows the offices and central zones to have more natural light. It gives the feeling of freshness and openness.

Special attention was paid to disabled accessibility by installing automatic opening doors on both sides of the footbridge to the JDE building and by installing a toilet for people with reduced mobility on each floor.

The VMA building has now an improved performance in terms of energy savings, and offers a modern look and an efficient and comfortable working space to all its users with the aim to nurture collaboration and improve the well-being at work.

Energy saving measures

Energy saving measures are being implemented since the beginning of the implementation of the Environmental Management System within the Committees in 2009, with a significant reduction in energy consumption.

In light of the energy crisis since end 2021, exacerbated since February 2022 with the conflict in Ukraine and the financial consequences it entails, since 1 April 2022 a series of additional energy-saving measures have been implemented across the Committees.

These measures continued to be applied in 2023 and can be summarized as follows:

- To reduce the winter temperature in all buildings to 19°C;
- for the summer period, to increase the start-up temperature for the air conditioning system to 27°C;
- closure of some buildings during low presence periods;
- Relighting with LEDs, installing presence detectors and reducing the operating hours for lighting (between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.) in less frequented areas without detectors;
- restoring recirculation in air handling groups by replacing filters with a new generation of more efficient filters with virucidal properties and by extensively installing CO₂ sensors in critical facilities that can monitor CO₂ levels.

LIFT OF PURCHASE OPTIONS

After having informed the budgetary authority, the Committees lifted in 2018 and 2019 the purchase options provided in the long-term leasehold contracts for the following buildings occupied jointly, which they now own:

- JDE building, on Rue Belliard 99-101, 1040 Brussels
- BvS building, on Rue Montoyer 92-102, 1000, Brussels
- REM building, on Rue Belliard 93, 1000, Brussels

It is also important to note that exercising the purchase option (for a symbolic sum of EUR 1 per building) has not changed the financial conditions set out in the long-term leasehold contracts. The European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions still have to continue paying the annual leasehold fees in accordance with the contracts for the remainder of their term.

The Committees will exercise the option to purchase the VMA building between 1 September 2028 and 31 October 2028 as provided for in the long-term lease contract.

In conclusion, the budgetary authority is informed about:

- the entering into force on 16 September 2022 of the Administrative Agreement signed on 28 August 2019 between the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions concerning the exchange of the Committees' B68/TRE74 buildings for the Commission's VMA building^[4];
- the takeover by the Committees of the rental contract of the B100 building as from 1 September 2021, following the signature on 22 June 2021 of an Administrative Agreement with the European External Action Service for that has received the agreement of the budgetary authority in June 2021;
- the results of the renovation works of the third to the ninth floor of the VMA building, undertaken between December 2021 and April 2023, for an amount of EUR 9,54 million, following the agreement of the budgetary authority received in November 2021;
- the state of play related to the exercising of the options to purchase the buildings occupied by the Committees, for which there were no changes in 2023.

4) Part 3: Project implementation of new building projects previously submitted to the European Parliament and the Council

No new projects were presented to the European Parliament and the Council in 2023.

EXPENDITURE AND SURFACE AREA FOR EACH BUILDING (EESC and CoR together)

Budget line		Building	Gross Area above ground (m ²)	Type of contract	Amount in budget 2024 (€)
A02001	Annual lease payments				
	OFFICE SPACE	JDE	22,026	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2018)	7.968.022
		BVS	18,281	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2019)	6.678.377
		REM	2,324	Emphyteusis with option to buy (exercised in 2019)	352.141
		VMA	11,526	Emphyteusis with option to buy, not yet exercised	4.396.498
	<i>Subtotal office space</i>		<i>54,156</i>		<i>19.395.038</i>
	NON-OFFICE SPACE	JDE	14,353		5.192.274
		BVS	2,285		834.751
		REM	0		0
		VMA	4,784		2.067.076
	<i>Subtotal non-office space</i>		<i>21,423</i>		<i>8.094.101</i>
TOTAL LINE			75,579		27.489.139
A02000	Rent				
	OFFICE SPACE	B100	5,827	Rent	1.768.536
	<i>Subtotal office space</i>		<i>5,827</i>		<i>1.768.536</i>
	NON-OFFICE SPACE	B100	0		0
	<i>Subtotal non-office space</i>		<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>
TOTAL LINE			5,827		1.768.536
GRAND TOTALS			81,406		29.257.675
Share of office space in total space (%)			73.7%		
Share of non-office space in total space (%)			26.3%		
Employees to be accommodated			1,485		
Office space / employee (m²)[37]			40,4		

[1] This date was determined by an external real estate expert and takes into account the market price of the buildings minus the long-term lease instalments still to be paid.

[2] 13 396 m² minus the VMA surface area of 2 956 m² currently occupied by the European Commission. The other part of the building is already occupied by the Committees.

[3] references EESC (2021) D/1012 - Official registration N° 335 and CDR (2021) D/967 - Official registration N° 511

[4] Both sets of buildings will have the same value on 16 September 2022, the date when the exchange will take effect.

7.9 ANNEX 9 – Sample of activities of the CoR involving members in 2023³⁸

Number of activities	Title	Place
6	Plenary Sessions	Brussels
2	External Bureau meeting	Kiruna (Sweden), Logroño (Spain)
9	Conference of Presidents	Przemysl, Kyiv (Ukraine), Kiruna (Sweden), La Rioja (Spain), Brussels
21	Commission meetings	Brussels
6	External Commission meetings	Various Member States
4	Commissions for administrative & financial affairs	Brussels
4	Ad Hoc Commission on the revision of Rules of Procedure	Brussels
7	Meetings of the political groups outside Brussels	Various Member States
4	Extraordinary meetings of the political groups in Brussels	Brussels
2	Meeting of the Working Group on relations with Türkiye	Brussels
2	Meetings of the Working Group Western Balkans	Brussels, Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
2	Meeting of the JCC North Macedonia	Brussels, Skopje (North Macedonia)
1	Meeting of the JCC Serbia	Brussels
2	Meetings of the JCC Montenegro	Brussels, Kolasin (Montenegro)
1	Enlargement Day	Brussels
3	Meetings of the Working Group Ukraine	Gdansk (Poland), Brussels, Lviv (Ukraine)
1	Meetings of the CoR-UK Contact Group	Brussels
3	Meetings of the Working Group Green Deal Going Local	Brussels
2	Meetings of the Political Monitoring Group	Brussels
2	Meetings of the Working Group on Subsidiarity (BRASS-G)	Brussels
12	Seminars/Study visits organised by commission secretariats	Various Members States
29	Seminars/conferences organised by commission secretariats	Various Members States
1	Seminar organised by political groups	Brussels
4	Seminars organised by political groups outside Brussels	Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia
1	ARLEM plenary session	Alghero (Italy)
1	ARLEM commission	Rabat (Morocco)
1	CORLEAP Annual meeting	Batumi (Georgia)
1	European Week of regions and Cities	Brussels
1	EUROPCOM	Brussels
43	Local events	Various Members States

³⁸ An important number of additional activities with the attendance of members exist: final figures are pending the sending of all claims for reimbursement, which may be submitted by 01/12/N+1.

Appendix: details on Members attendance to local events organised in 2023

Country	Region/ Municipality	Topics	Date	CoR members involved
Italy	Marche Region	Development opportunities to attract employment and investments in Marche Region	13/04/2023	Andrea Putzu
Czechia	Zbytiny Municipality	Gathering of representatives of neighbouring villages of rural part of South Bohemia region	20/04/2023	Robert Zeman Pavel Branda
Czechia	Volary	Sustainable forest management - The way to mitigate the course of climate change	03/05/2023	Robert Zeman Oldřich Vlasák
Ireland	Cork City	Europe Day Festival	07/05/2023	Kieran McCarthy
Italy	Umbria	L'Europa e la Pace	09/05/2023	Donatella Porzi
Hungary	Mohács	Europe day and discussion about the future of mobility in Europe	13/05/2023	Patrik Schwarcz-Kiefer
Poland	Pomorskie	European debate for young people: Europe in Kartuzy – Kartuzy in Europe	22/05/2023	Mieczysław Struk
Poland	Pomorskie	European debate for young people: Europe in Kościerzyna – Kościerzyna in Europe	07/06/2023	Mieczysław Struk
Poland	Podkarpackie	Building public trust in the use of drones at the regional and local level through their use by emergency services	28/07/2023	Władysław Ortyl
Romania	Harghita County	TúrjBele Te is! (in EN would be Get into it too! Get involved in it too!)	16/09/2023	Csaba Borboly
Romania	Harghita County	Up to the hill!	23/09/2023	Csaba Borboly
Italy	Tuscany	Stakeholder Consultation on 2022 Competition Policy Report opinion	28/09/2023	Antonio Mazzeo
Italy	Tuscany	Panel as part of the Forum Europeo del Verde - European Green Forum	30/09/2023	Lorenzo Galligani Matteo Bianchi
Romania	Harghita County	Conservation of Biodiversity and the Coexistence Challenges Posed by Large Carnivores	22/10/2023	Csaba Borboly
Croatia	Zabok	The challenges and opportunities of policies for youth mobility and affordable housing for youth	26/10/2023	Marko Vešligaj Joško Klisović Nuška Gajšek
Italy	Varese	The role of local and regional authorities in the future of the European Union, the organizational models for the promotion of the territories in view of the Milano-Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics Games and consequent cross-border cooperation	06/11/2023	Matteo Bianchi Elia Delmiglio Carmine Pacente Roberto Pella
Slovenia	Novo mesto	Future Paths Ljubljana - Novo mesto - Karlovac - Zagreb (New EGTC)	10/11/2023	Gregor Macedoni

Country	Region/ Municipality	Topics	Date	CoR members involved
Estonia	Rakvere	Green city Rakvere - green development of local governments - inspired by Europe	13/11/2023	Andres Jaadla Juri Gotmans Jan Trei Rait Pihelgas Mihkel Juhkami
Italy	Rome	Building a values-based, bottom-up European sports model: a vehicle for encouraging inclusion and social wellbeing among young Europeans	05/12/2023	Roberto Pella
Italy	Calabria, Rocella, Jonica	L'integrazione dei migranti volano per il rilancio del territorio (Integration of migrants as a driving force for territorial revitalisation)	17/12/2023	Giuseppe Varacalli
Finland	Kuopio and Joensuu	European evening (Finnish: Eurooppaglöggit)	18-19/12/2023	Niina Ratilainen

7.10 ANNEX 10 - Follow-up to the 2022 discharge resolution

Follow-up to EP Plenary discharge decision covering the budget implementation year 2022

Nr.	Resolution text	Follow-up by the CoR
A	Whereas in the context of the discharge procedure, the discharge authority wishes to stress the particular importance of further strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the Union institutions by improving transparency and accountability, and implementing the concept of performance-based budgeting and good governance of human resources;	
B	Whereas the Committee of the Regions (the 'Committee') is a political assembly of 329 members elected in the regions, cities, villages and municipalities of the 27 Member States of the Union, operating as a consultative body for the Union institutions with the mission of contributing to the Union policy shaping and decision making process from the point of view of the local and regional authorities and at the same time contributing to make the Union more effective and closer to the citizens;	Budget limitations over the last 25 years have impaired the CoR's ability to fully deliver on its Treaty obligations and to bring citizens closer to the European Union. This has massively limited the CoR's added value for the EU Institutions and puts its institutional role as defined by the Treaty at risk. To address this, in the CoR DB 2025 includes new projects on top of the minimum requirements to meet statutory, legal and contractual obligations.
C	Whereas the consultation of the Committee by the Commission or the Council is mandatory in certain cases, the Committee may also adopt opinions on its own initiative and enjoys a wide area for referral, as set out in the Treaties, allowing it to be consulted by Parliament;	
D	Whereas the Committee's activities are defined on the basis of its overall political strategy as set out in its resolution of 2 July 2020 on its priorities for 2020-2025 ³⁹ , and whereas the Committee adopted three political priorities for the 2020-2025 mandate, accompanied by three communication campaigns: Bringing Europe closer to people, Building resilient regional and local communities, and Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the Union;	
E	Whereas local and regional administrations account for one third of public spending, half of public investment and one fourth of tax revenues and, in many Member States, hold competencies in key areas such as education, economic development and cohesion, environment, social protection, health and services of general interest, hence the coordination of local, regional, national and European levels increases the legitimacy of legislation, improves ownership and more effectively pursues the benefit of citizens;	This is why more territorial impact assessments (TIA) would be beneficial for the European legislator. The CoR has engaged in TIAs over the last year but would need more resources to deliver them to the legislative Institutions. To address this, in the CoR DB 2024 included as a separate envelope the project «Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU» on the basis of the proposals in the final report of the COFE issued on 9 May 2022. <i>Please see comment to item Nr 16.</i>

F	Whereas the Committee pursues its political goal of strengthening its involvement in the entire Union political and legislative cycle while making more tangible the connection with Union citizens that use the Committee's members as powerful multipliers in their communities and in their national associations of local and regional authorities;	
G	Whereas the over 400 national and regional programmes in place for the delivery of the Union cohesion policy in the 2021-2027 programming period will make available approximately EUR 380 billion, under different funds, to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges that regions, cities, villages and municipalities in the Union are facing;	
H	Whereas, as an Union institution within the meaning of the Financial Regulation, the Committee is required to adopt its own annual accounts, prepared in accordance with the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer (European Union Accounting Rules) and based on the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, which are ultimately consolidated into those of the Union;	
1	Notes that the budget of the Committee falls under MFF heading 7 'European public administration', which amounted to a total of EUR 11,6 billion in 2022, i.e. 5,9 % of Union budget spending; notes that, in 2022, the budget of the Committee represented 0,95 % of MFF heading 7;	Committee contributes to the Union policy and decision making process from the perspective of the regional and local authorities within the Union. Important to say that around 70% of the EU legislation is implemented at local and regional level. CoR budget 2022 represented 0.95% of MM heading 7 which is a very little amount to fully deliver on its Treaty obligations and to bring citizens closer to the European Union. The repetitive limitations in the budget have massively impacted on the purchasing capacity of the CoR, putting its institutional role as defined by the Treaty at risk.
2	Notes that the Court of Auditors (the 'Court') in its Annual Report for the financial year 2022 examined a sample of 60 transactions under Administration, the same number as were examined in 2021; further notes that the Court writes that administrative expenditure comprises expenditure on human resources, including expenditure on pensions, which in 2022 accounted for about 70 % of the total administrative expenditure, and expenditure on buildings, equipment, energy, communications and information technology, and that its work over many years indicates that, overall, this spending is low risk;	
3	Notes that, as part of its audit for 2022, the Court, examined the supervisory and control systems of the Committee, in particular the implementation of internal control standards, risk management and the functioning of key controls defined in the Financial Regulation, including ex ante and ex post controls on payments;	
4	Notes that 14 (23 %) of the 60 transactions contained errors but that the Court, based on the five errors which were quantified, estimates the level of error to be below the materiality threshold;	There were no errors for the Committee of the Regions. <i>Please see comment to item Nr5.</i>
5	Notes with satisfaction that the Court, in its Annual Report for the financial year 2022, states that it did not identify any specific issues concerning the Committee;	The CoR continues to be fully committed to maintaining the good level of administration, the compliance with the principle of the sound financial management and transparency, even further improve them, where possible.

BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT		
6	Notes that, in 2022, the final adopted budget for the Committee amounted to EUR 109 976 858, including Amending Budget 5/2022, representing an overall increase of 3,03 % compared to 2021; notes that the appropriations on budget line 1004 for 'travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure' increased from EUR 4 244 488 to EUR 8 158 838, i.e. by 92 %, between 2021 and 2022, owing to the resumption of travel after the COVID-19 pandemic; notes that, otherwise, the distribution of appropriations across budget lines in the 2022 budget remained comparable to previous years' distribution;	As a political institution composed of elected members all its budget – as it is the case for the European Parliament – serves the purpose to support the Members in their political work. The increase of the expenses linked to the budget line 1004 are mainly due to the fact that in 2021 there were a high number of remote meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In year 2022 progressively the situation returned to in-person meetings implying more travels. In addition, the prices for travelling increased significantly.
7	Notes that the missions' budget for 2022 amounted to EUR 419 657, compared to EUR 169 856 in 2021, i.e. an increase of 147 %, which can be explained by the number of online meetings in 2021 and at the beginning of 2022 due to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the increase in travel prices in 2022; notes that the allowance for the Committee's Presidency (President and 1st Vice-President) for travel and meeting expenses, which are financed from the general budget for Members expenses, increased from EUR 49 852 to EUR 71 810, i.e. an increase of 44 %, between 2021 and 2022; welcomes the guidance towards a more cost effective, purposeful and sustainable mission policy that was circulated in June 2022 with a view to reducing the Committee's staff missions to a minimum;	The increase of the expenses of the Committee's Presidency for attending meetings (travel expenses and allowances) by 44% between 2021 and 2022 can be explained by the high number of remote meetings in 2021 and in the first months of 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and by the price increases for travel in 2022 once meetings returned to an in-person setting
8	Notes that the budget implementation rate was 99,2 % in 2022, which is slightly higher than in 2021, when the budget implementation rate was 98,9 %;	The CoR yearly budget outturn has increased even further in 2023 reaching 99,9% - the highest in the CoR's history. The payment rate of current appropriations (C1 2023) has also increased further reaching 91,2% at the end of 2023. The very high execution rate over years is the result of the CoR's budget planning and execution optimization, but also due to continuously increasing budgetary pressures over the years.
9	Notes that the average time for payment in 2022 was 17,87 days, which is higher than in 2021 when it was 16,11 days; notes that, at the same time, the percentage of electronic invoicing increased from 32 % to 68 %; remarks that there is no correlation between the two figures and calls on the Committee to complete the digitalisation of the payment workflow aiming to improve its efficiency and timeliness;	From 1 April 2022 the CoR stopped accepting invoices received in pdf format. Since then, the number of electronic invoices is steadily increasing. In 2023 76% of invoices were electronic (68% in 2022) and in the first quarter of 2024 – 82%.
10	Notes that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine created budgetary pressure for the Committee, including through rising inflation and salary adjustments, strongly increasing energy costs and the cost of construction and raw materials; notes further that the Committee mobilised its political support to Ukrainian local and regional authorities and organised activities in relation to the war against Ukraine, which had an impact on the budget for missions, studies and trainings;	As far as the budget is concerned, the very high inflation recorded in Belgium and the EU as a whole in 2022 and 2023 (to a large extent driven by the geopolitical situation and unprecedented fluctuations in energy prices) has led to a substantial erosion of the purchasing power of the CoR's budget in 2022 and 2023 that aggravates further in 2024. This has created an additional structural underfinancing in a number of domains in 2022-2023 (annual lease payments, IT, communication, upkeep of buildings, etc. . .) that have not been recovered during the 2024 budget process. In fact, additional structural underfinancing was created in the 2024 budget process in particular for statutory obligations (lease payments).
11	Notes that the Committee's own services organised 14 procurement calls for tenders in 2022, including 11 negotiated procurement procedures for remote interpretation services in the Member States; notes that procurement procedures in the field of logistics were launched by the joint services that the Committee shares with the European Economic and Social Committee (the 'EESC');	

INTERNAL MANAGEMENT, PERFORMANCE AND INTERNAL CONTROL		
12	<p>Notes that the Committee contributes to the Union policy and decision making process from the perspective of the regional and local authorities within the Union and provides a framework to enhance cooperation between the local, regional, national and European levels and to bring Europe closer to its citizens; welcomes the relevance of the contribution of the Committee to important Union topics such as the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility as reflected in Parliament's resolution of 23 June 2022 on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility⁴⁰; further encourages the Committee to assist its members in participating in local dialogues with citizens on European matters;</p>	<p>The Committee places importance on fostering local dialogue; therefore, it supported the organisation of 93 local dialogues in 2023.</p>
13	<p>Notes that the Committee pursues its mission through opinions, which refer to legislative proposals made by the Commission (referrals), own-initiative opinions, which call on the Union institutions to take action, and resolutions, which highlight the Committee's position on specific topics; notes that, in 2022, the Committee adopted 55 opinions and 8 resolutions which is slightly lower than in 2021 when the Committee adopted 60 opinions and 9 resolutions; encourages the Committee to continue boosting its ability to provide evidence from the ground to the principal Union institutions, using data, empirical analyses and compilations of best practice;</p>	<p>The number of the CoR opinions highly depends on the formal consultations and EC documents received for information. When deemed necessary the CoR adopts opinions entirely on its own initiative. In all possible cases, and based on the budget availability, additional evidence-based data is provided through studies and through the consultation of its existing networks such as RegHub (Regional Hubs), TIA (Territorial Impact Assessments), Green Deal Going Local and its rural proofing initiative. When applicable and following the annual CoR Subsidiarity Work Programme, assessments on subsidiarity and proportionality are also performed within the CoR Subsidiarity Expert Group.</p> <p>The CoR fully agrees with the recommendation to boost its capacity in these areas, and the necessary additional resources for this purpose have been regularly requested in the context of the annual budgetary procedure.</p>
14	<p>Welcomes that the Committee took concrete steps to strengthen its involvement in the entire Union political and legislative cycle in line with its prerogatives under the Treaties; welcomes, in particular, the cooperation agreement between Parliament and the Committee and the close cooperation between the Committee and several parliamentary committees, intergroups and directorates-general; notes that, in 2022, the Committee organised 56 preparatory and follow-up meetings with Parliament for the rapporteurs of its opinions; notes further that 20 Committee rapporteurs intervened in Parliament's committee meetings in 2022; congratulates the Committee for strengthening its involvement in legislative trilogues, notably by being granted access to trilogue documents; considers that members of the Committee and of the EESC should be invited to relevant parliamentary exchanges, including committee meetings, on issues they are dealing with;</p>	<p>Throughout 2023, the CoR has been reviewing its Cooperation Agreement with the EP, with the signature foreseen in May 2024.</p> <p>Internal preparatory work to ensure the effective implementation of these provisions will begin immediately following the signature of the revised Agreement.</p> <p>The Committee pursued its objective and function and requested access to additional selected 4-column trilogue documents in 2023.</p> <p>The Committee welcomes recognition of the need for its invitation to relevant parliamentary exchanges, such as committee meetings, regarding the issues they address.</p>

<p>15</p>	<p>Welcomes the measures taken by the Committee throughout 2022 to optimise its resources and to improve cost-effectiveness while increasing the impact of its political work in the context of the 'Going for IMPact' programme and in particular the 43 simplification and digitalisation projects that contribute to the modernisation of the Committee's administration and to the digitalisation of workflows as part of the 'Strategy on the simplification of Committee rules and procedures for the period 2020-2025';</p>	<p>The implementation of the simplification projects launched in the context of the "Going for IMPact" initiative has continued in 2023 and, by the year, almost 90% of the projects were fully implemented.</p> <p>Possibilities for further digitalisation and new working methods continued to be analysed and put in place to furtherly gain in efficiency. In 2023, a project was led in order to define the best tool for the electronic management of form-based workflows. As a follow up, many processes started being simplified and digitalised in 2023 through Microsoft 365 tools. This work helps covering the gap between the IT development and the common user, for those small projects that are too big to be treated by the IT helpdesk but are too small to fit in the CoR's IT work plan, providing agility and flexibility to the CoR's digital strategy.</p> <p>Examples of projects of simplification and digitalisation finalised in 2023 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further completion of the Convergence project, • The digitalisation of many administrative processes, among which the CFAA workflow for the approval of the CFAA related documents, the sensitive posts evaluation exercise, and a new fully digitalised Register of Procedures; • The updating of written procedures and reduction of their number; • The revision, updating and reduction of legal documents (such as decisions and service instructions). <p>The implementation of the projects resulted in increased work quality, increased traceability, time savings, and contributed to reducing the carbon footprint (thanks to the saving of paper) and to improving the image of the institution perceived by staff.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Welcomes the active involvement of the Committee in the works of the Conference on the Future of Europe ('CoFE') with a delegation of 30 members, 12 of whom represented the European associations of local and regional authorities; notes that, following the work performed in 2021, in 2022 the Committee organised 14 meetings with CoFE delegates and 9 preparatory meetings; highlights that the Committee created a dedicated task force, 'Conference on the Future of Europe', to coordinate the work of all directorates and units involved; notes that proposals contained in the final report of the CoFE, issued on 9 May 2022, were taken up in the Committee's project 'Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU', which was implemented throughout 2022;</p>	<p>In preparation of the COFE feedback event with the citizens in December 2022, the CoR published a report with information on the state of play and outlooks on initiatives implementing relevant COFE proposals. In 2023 and 2024, references to the implementation of COFE proposals were highlighted in relevant consultative work, when possible, as well as in debate and events. For instance, a standing point with debates on COFE proposals took place in all the meetings of the CIVEX commission and the external commission meeting in Timisoara in September 2023 was also related to COFE proposals on European citizenship, European identity and democratic values.</p> <p>As concerns the CoR project "Tapping into the regional and local authorities' potential to strengthen the EU": it was submitted to the European Commission with Council and European Parliament in copy for the first time in June 2022. The EC did not include it in the Amending Letter at that time (2023 budget process).</p> <p>A more detailed part of the project (covering 50% of the whole project) was prepared and included in the CoR Draft Budget 2024 as a separate envelope with the total value of € 14.7 million.</p> <p>On 8 May 2023 the EC has announced its cuts to the DBs 2024 of all Institutions. On top of heavy cuts on the normal part of the CoR DB 2024, the EC cut all funding requested for this project. As these cuts ended up in the definite CoR 2024 budget, it has not been possible for the CoR to implement this project so far. In the CoR DB 2025 estimates part of the Cinderella project was included in the format of specific projects.</p>

17	Underlines that in its final report, the plenary assembly of the CoFE in its 40th recommendation, under measure 3, calls for a reform the Committee, encompassing adequate channels of dialogue for regions as well as cities, villages and municipalities, giving it an enhanced role in the institutional architecture, if matters with a territorial impact are concerned;	Proposals and measures featured in COFE recommendation no. 40 have been mainly developed in the works of the CoR Better Regulation and Active Subsidiarity Steering Group (BRASS-G). The group coordinates and steers the CoR activities and tools concerning better regulation and active subsidiarity and it is drafting recommendations to streamline and strengthen such tools with a view to the next CoR mandate. BRASS-G work is accompanied by the preparation of an opinion on "Active subsidiarity: a fundamental principle of the EU better regulation agenda" (CDR 564/2023), to be adopted in the CoR 2024 June Plenary Session.
18	Notes that, in 2022, the Committee reviewed and strengthened its internal control framework at the levels of planning and reporting, systems, financial verification and sensitive functions; congratulates the Committee for developing the dedicated convergence tool and platform for planning, reporting, risk assessment and business continuity; notes that the new sensitive posts policy entered into force on 1 January 2022 and was communicated to staff on 27 January 2022;	<p>Most of the processes entailed in the Convergence project were reviewed and simplified during 2022 and the last two, the Annual Activity Report and Business Continuity have been finalised in 2023. The new methodology has been successfully implemented for each one of the processes' first exercise.</p> <p>In 2023, the development of the Convergence platform (SharePoint based tool for planning, reporting, risk assessment, business continuity and some aspects of Internal Control) has continued in order to enable the implementation of the Convergence project. It includes now a tool for the management of Sensitive Posts and a Monitoring tool that substitutes the complex Rolling Actions Plan. It also allows the follow up of punctual actions derived from the Annual Operational Working Plan objectives, of mitigating measures to tackle identified risks and threats to the business continuity and mitigating measures for the exceptions. Further improvements have been done to ensure the platform's optimisation and the secure management of inter-annual data.</p>
19	Notes that, until April 2022, all meetings were held online, whereas as of April 2022 statutory meetings are organised in physical presence while other meetings may be organised remotely or in hybrid format; notes that, until the revision of the Committee's rules of procedure in 2023, a flat-rate meeting allowance of EUR 200 for remote and hybrid meetings continued to be paid according to the rules in place since 2021; notes that as of July 2023 the remote meeting allowance is set at 50 % of the standard meeting allowance (i.e. currently 50 % of EUR 359, equalling EUR 179,50); considers that remote attendance is an important instrument for modern institutions given that, inter alia, it reduces the costs of meetings and allows broader participation, especially during crisis situations as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic; notes with satisfaction that the recommendations of the internal audit on the adequacy of the planning and management of allowances and reimbursements to members for attendances at meetings were satisfactorily implemented;	Pursuant to the provisions of Regulation n°5/2023, since 23 July 2023 the remote meeting allowance for members, alternate members, rapporteurs' experts and speakers is set at 50% of the standard meeting allowance. Following the adjustment of allowances by Bureau decision of 30 January 2024, the remote meeting allowance currently corresponds to 183,5 € (i.e. 50% of 367 €).
HUMAN RESOURCES, EQUALITY AND STAFF WELL-BEING		
20	Notes that, at the end of 2022, the Committee had a total of 533 members of staff, compared to 547 in 2021 and 537 in 2020; notes that 56 contract agents and 89 temporary agents were employed by the Committee at the end of 2022, out of which 21 contract agents had an indefinite contract and three temporary agents were employed in a temporary position, in two cases with an indefinite contract and, in the case of the Secretary-General, for a fixed duration of five years; notes, in addition, that the Committee employed 8 interim agents and 14 external members of staff working on-site, excluding external service providers in the fields of logistics and IT; notes, in 2022, that the occupation rate of the posts in the establishment plan was 96 %;	

21	<p>Notes that a new pilot project on a hybrid working regime, aiming to align the HR framework to new ways of working, entered into force in April 2022, providing the possibility for Committee staff to organise their weekly and daily work with a high degree of flexibility and to telework up to 60 % of their working time; welcomes that the new regime allows for the possibility of a number of part-time formulas based on the statutory rights provided in the Staff Regulation; notes with satisfaction that 90,25 % of those that responded to the staff survey of December 2022 indicated their satisfaction with those flexible arrangements;</p>	
22	<p>Notes with concern that 16 cases of burnout were reported in the Committee in 2022; notes further that the Committee managed to reintegrate 15 members of staff in 2022 after long-term absence as a result of burnout, thanks to a personalised follow-up of long-term sickness leave; welcomes the preventive actions taken by the Committee to reduce psychosocial risks and burnout; appreciates in this regard the proactive approach of the medical service and the awareness-raising conferences, trainings and courses organized by the Committee;</p>	<p>Throughout 2023, the CoR has continued its proactive policy of preventive actions aiming at reducing psychosocial risks and burnout. The personalised follow-up of colleagues in long-term sick leave and of return-to-work processes is an essential feature of this policy. To even enhance this personalised follow-up, framework contracts have been concluded with medical experts (notably one for psychiatric expertise).</p> <p>Furthermore, the CoR has stepped up its efforts in order to make this policy even more efficient. In particular, systematic trainings have been organised for all CoR managers (including also functional managers), in small groups, on how to deal with long-term absences, in order both to enhance good practices and to underline the need of an optimal cooperation between managers, medical service, social worker and HR.</p>
23	<p>Notes that the Committee continued to raise awareness about the measures put in place to combat harassment in the workplace in accordance with its Decision of 26 April 2021 on protecting dignity at work, managing conflict and combatting harassment, notably through dedicated guidance, internal communication and the organisation of several information sessions for staff and managers; notes that, in 2022, the Committee had to deal with a new allegation of psychological harassment by a member of staff of the EESC against a member of staff of the Committee which allegation is still under examination by both committees; calls on the Committee to report on the follow-up to that allegation, notably taking into account the inter-institutional perspective;</p>	<p>Both Committees jointly carried out a detailed and profound enquiry on the allegations of psychological harassment, by interviewing five persons chosen or agreed by the person concerned, by hearing the person concerned as well as by giving several occasions to substantiate the allegations. However, the enquiry did not confirm any of the allegations made. The person concerned was informed accordingly.</p>
24	<p>Notes that, at the end of 2022, the Committee was employed 56,8 % women and 43,2 % men, compared to 56,6 % women in 2021 and 55,5 % women in 2020; notes with concerns that the distribution of women across grades and status follows the same trend as in previous years and regrets that, despite the appointment of a new female director in 2023 and some efforts to attract more women to management positions, the situation remains particularly unbalanced both at senior and middle management levels; recommends that vacancy notices are made more inclusive and that more women are encouraged to apply for senior and middle management positions, including by ensuring a balanced representation on selection boards, by offering training opportunities for female staff that wishes to prepare for a managerial career and by proposing more flexible work arrangements;</p>	<p>The CoR strives to ensure an adequate gender balance at both the senior and middle management in line with its ambitious diversity and inclusion strategy 2022-2026. Despite the limited number of possibilities, due to the size of the institution, the CoR continues to encourage women to prepare and apply for management positions and offers various support efforts such as dedicated trainings and flexible work arrangements. The CoR administration also regularly reports on the gender balance to its administrative and political management to raise awareness on the importance of this topic. Procedural aspects related to recruitment are regularly monitored and updated to improve inclusivity.</p>

25	<p>Welcomes that, on 7 July 2022, the Committee adopted a new five-year diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan for 2022-2026; encourages the Committee to pursue its efforts to reach the targets set out in that strategy and action plan, notably the gender equality target of 40 % of women in senior management positions by 2024 with the introduction of parity as the ultimate goal; welcomes the awareness-raising and the targeted measures put in place to promote and enhance a more diverse and inclusive workplace at the level of staff representation and contact points across all Committee departments under the coordination of a dedicated diversity and inclusion coordinator;</p>	<p>Over the past year, strides have been made towards a better gender balance. Senior management positions witnessed a substantial increase from 37.5% in 2022 to 44.4% in 2023. Middle management positions saw a rise from 29.7% in 2022 to 32.5% in 2023, indicating a positive trend, that needs to be encouraged by further measures (see above).</p>
26	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee employed members of staff representing all Union nationalities and one member of staff of Ukrainian nationality; notes that, while welcoming the Committee's efforts to balance the geographical distribution among its staff, geographical balance has still not been reached as some nationalities continue to be overrepresented compared to others; encourages the Committee to continue to take action to reach a proper geographical distribution within its staff with a particular focus on the management level; welcomes the participation of the Committee in the interinstitutional taskforce on geographical balance which aims at sharing best practices and creating synergies among Union institutions;</p>	<p>Geographical balance and an equitable representation of Member States in its staff remains a key pillar of the recruitment policy of the CoR. The institution will continue its participation in various interinstitutional platforms, including the taskforce on geographical balance but also in the EPSO working group to address related issues and create synergies where possible. In addition, as of May 2024, the CoR will also publish its calls for expression of interest for contract and temporary staff on its website and social media, thus targeting a wider audience and increasing its possibilities to improve geographical balance.</p>
27	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee ran, for the first time, a pilot interinstitutional job shadowing scheme involving three Union institutions and 25 participants, aiming at increasing the understanding of the working methods and processes of other institutions, reinforcing interinstitutional collaboration, promoting mobility and providing for a more flexible workforce; congratulates the Committee for launching this innovative interinstitutional initiative which was then scaled up and taken over by the European School of Administration as of 2023;</p>	<p>In 2023 the interinstitutional job shadowing was taken over by EuSA which was originally brought to life by the CoR internal mobility service. Also in 2023 the initiative was strongly supported by the CoR, which hosted the opening and the closing events in its premises. In total 169 colleagues from 10 different institutions took advantage of this offer including colleagues from the European Committee of the Regions, the Council, the European Commission, the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) and several agencies (REA, ERCEA, EHaDEA and EuSA). Following the success of the 2023 edition EuSA will organise the exercise in 2024.</p>
28	<p>Notes that the Committee had 60 trainees in 2022 of whom 48 were remunerated trainees and 12 were study visitors, in two cases receiving a social allowance; welcomes the new rules approved in 2022 in relation to the remuneration of trainees, whereby study visits can only be approved if either the trainee receives funding from another source or the traineeship is mandatory in the context of the trainee's studies and whereby all types of trainees can request a social allowance in duly justified cases; welcomes that trainees' working conditions are aligned to those of the staff under the new flexible working arrangements, meaning that trainees may telework from abroad one day per month of the traineeship;</p>	

ETHICAL FRAMEWORK AND TRANSPARENCY	
29	<p>Welcomes the Committee's efforts to enhance ethical awareness among its staff and the Committee's enforcement of ethics rules in different procedures, such as recruitment, and of ethical obligations and rights in different administrative situations, such as outside activities, training and leaving the service, as a follow-up to the internal audit on staff awareness of ethics; notes that the basic documents and rules underlying the ethical framework are published on the Committee's intranet in order to raise staff awareness about ethics rules; notes further that 14 collective training courses were organised by the Committee specifically on ethics-related topics in 2022, reaching 107 members of staff, and that 75 % of staff attended the general ethics training course throughout 2022;</p>
30	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee continued the implementation of its 2020 code of conduct for members and, in that respect, intensified its efforts to collect missing financial declarations of members; notes that six alternate members appointed in January 2020 had still failed to submit their financial declarations by June 2023 and that, although none of those six members had attended any meeting of the Committee since their appointment, the Committee launched the enforcement procedure laid down in the members' code of conduct;</p> <p>During the preliminary stages of the enforcement procedure, five of the alternate members concerned submitted their declaration of financial interest. The sixth alternate member terminated his CoR mandate.</p>
31	<p>Notes that the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) investigated three cases in 2022 out of which one case was new and concerned outside gainful activities and two cases were ongoing and closed that same year and concerned respectively undue payment of travel allowances and allegations of financial wrongdoings, harassment and mismanagement in a joint service of the Committee and the EESC; notes that the case concerning the payment of undue travel allowances was closed at the beginning of 2022 with the request by the Committee to the member in question to reimburse the allowance received for ethical reasons in the absence of a legal basis to recover such amounts; notes that, at the beginning of 2024, the member in question communicated his intention to reimburse the amount initially requested by OLAF for ethical reasons, and that the Committee's financial services were ready to take all necessary steps in this regard; asks the Committee to inform the discharge authority of the Committee's follow-up to this case in accordance with the statutory obligations of staff under the Staff Regulations, in particular because the case involved a member of the Committee who was, at the same time, an accredited parliamentary assistant with Brussels as the contractual place of work, meaning that there was no need for travel expenses for meetings of the Committee taking place in Brussels; notes that the case concerning allegations of financial wrongdoings, harassment and mismanagement in a joint service gave rise to a conflict-management exercise involving the persons concerned, their hierarchy and the respective HR departments with a five-point action plan which was implemented throughout 2021 and 2022;</p> <p>As regards the case concerning the alleged undue payment of travel allowances by a Member, as correctly stated, the Member concerned informed the President of the CoR of his intention to reimburse the amount initially requested by OLAF for ethical reasons after reconsidering his first decision. Indeed, the CoR received the total disputed amount on 27 February 2024.</p> <p>The CoR would like to point out that this case does not concern Staff Regulations because it involved a CoR Member and, consequently, this legal framework cannot be applicable to him. CoR members must comply with the CoR Code of Conduct.</p> <p>As regards the case on 'outside gainful activities', OLAF submitted its investigation report to the CoR in November 2023. Following OLAF's recommendation, the CoR opened a disciplinary procedure, with the disciplinary board submitting its opinion to the CoR Appointing Authority in April 2024. The Appointing Authorities decision is imminent.</p> <p>As regards the case concerning allegations of financial wrongdoings, harassment and mismanagement in a CoR – EESC joint service, a five-point action plan has been implemented throughout 2021, 2022 and 2023. The conflict management process was closed by a final meeting held by the two Secretaries-General, the concerned joint unit, the directorate and HR representatives held on 7 December 2023. As a result, a constructive path has been taken in the unit and a positive working relationship based on respect, cooperation and kindness has been re-established.</p>

32	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee continued to implement transparency measures such as the publication of members' declarations of financial interest on its website but did not formally join the EU Transparency Register set up by the interinstitutional agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (IIA)³; is aware that new transparency measures focusing on office-holding members and rapporteurs, in line with the principles of the EU Transparency Register, were adopted by the Committee in a decision taken by its bureau in July 2023 and notified to the Management Board of the EU Transparency Register; notes that, on 20 November 2023, the Management Board of the EU Transparency Register considered the transparency measures consistent with the objectives pursued by the IIA and welcomed the Committee's regulation as an important step in further strengthening the joint framework and fostering a common transparency culture at Union level; welcomes that the Committee formally joined the EU Transparency Register as from 1 January 2024;</p>	<p>With the adoption of Regulation n° 6/2023 of 4 July 2023, the CoR formally joined the EU Transparency Register on 1 January 2024. The transparency measures laid down therein entered into force for office-holding members (President, First Vice-President, Presidents of Political Groups and Commission Chairs) in office on that day and for rapporteurs appointed as from that date.</p>
33	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee did not detect any conflicts of interest, which would have required a follow-up by the administration; notes that the Committee continued to rely on the rules in place to prevent conflicts of interest and avoid revolving doors between the public and the private sector and to promote them through ethics trainings and awareness raising;</p>	
34	<p>Notes that no cases of whistleblowing were reported to the Committee in 2022; notes that the Committee continued to rely on the measures in place since 2015 concerning whistleblowing and to promote them through ethics trainings and awareness raising;</p>	
35	<p>Regrets that the Committee has not adopted an internal anti-fraud strategy; reiterates its call on the Committee in the discharge resolution for 2021 to launch an internal fraud risk analysis and to coordinate with the competent services of the Commission with a view to adopting an adequate internal anti-fraud strategy;</p>	<p>The CoR has a set of anti-fraud measures in place that are, on the one hand, applicable to the CoR members and, on the other hand, to CoR staff, implementing notably the Staff Regulations' and Financial Regulation's provisions. Unlike the European Commission, the CoR is not managing any operational programs.</p> <p>The CoR is open to coordinating with the competent services of the Commission in order to further strengthen the anti-fraud measures in place.</p>
DIGITALISATION, CYBERSECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION		
36	<p>Notes that the combined IT budget of the Committee and the EESC amounted to EUR 11 712 000 in 2022, including a reinforcement of EUR 750 000 by an internal budget transfer during the year, compared to EUR 12 860 000 in 2021, i.e. a decrease of 9 %;</p>	<p>Decrease is mainly due to the small number of transfers made to IT budget lines as there was a smaller flexibility on transfers from COVID-19 available appropriations compared to the massive ones in 2021. Nevertheless, a further implementation of the new ways of working supported by a digital transformation as well as the implementation of new cyber security regulation will require additional funding in the IT budget.</p>
37	<p>Notes that the Committee has a digital strategy aiming to provide IT services according to the best practices of IT management while optimising the use of human and financial resources; notes that the Committee worked on the adaptation and development of several strategic IT tools throughout 2022, aiming to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the political work of the Committee and of its administrative processes and workflows; notes that the main IT infrastructure project in 2022 concerned an adaptation of the network typology required for the new computer room in the Jacques Delors Building (JDE) in line with the hybrid cloud roadmap;</p>	

38	Notes that the Committee increased the amount of hybrid meetings in 2022 in order to adapt to hybrid work and to align its practices to the new guidance towards a more cost effective, purposeful and sustainable missions policy circulated in June 2022 by the Secretary-General of the Committee which requires the Committee to optimise its way of working and replace as many staff missions as possible by video-conferencing; understands that this new way of working required a technical upgrade in terms of equipment for hybrid meeting rooms;	
39	Notes that the Committee adopted new internal rules on data protection in 2022 that contain restrictions of certain rights of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data in the context of activities and procedures carried out by the Committee; notes further that the European Data Protection Supervisor did not conduct any investigation or enquiry with respect to the processing of personal data by the Committee in 2022;	
40	Notes that the Committee did not encounter any cyber-attacks in 2022; notes that the Committee and the EESC's new joint directorate for innovation and information technology is composed of three units, namely digital transformation, digital solutions and digital platforms; notes that the unit for digital platforms is responsible, inter alia, for cybersecurity; asks the Committee to inform the discharge authority on how the creation of this new structure contributed to enhancing the cybersecurity preparedness of its staff, in line with the NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) cybersecurity framework and in cooperation with the Cybersecurity Service for the Union's institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU); encourages the Committee to raise the cybersecurity awareness of their Members and staff, to carry out regular risk assessments of its IT infrastructure and to ensure regular audits and tests of its cyber defences;	Cybersecurity remains a key component of the Digital Strategy 2024-2026. Ensuring robust cybersecurity is part of the vision; it is both an objective and an underlying principle. The following actions are planned: 1) continuously manage compliance with the new cybersecurity regulation, 2) ongoing cybersecurity measures and 3) provide training and raising awareness for members and staff on cybersecurity best practices, continuing to build on existing synergies with other institutions. A series of false-phishing exercises have been held with a further exercise planned during 2024. Additional user-awareness sessions will be organized in collaboration with the specialist cybersecurity services of the Commission. User feedback on the topic has been collected and will be used to design future actions.
41	Welcomes the efforts of the Committee to foster open source technology in its own systems, notably the main operational applications used for managing the political work of the Committee (Agora and Phoenix); notes further that the Committee tracks the use of open source technologies in its annual IT portfolio so that they are applied to new applications;	
BUILDINGS		
42	Notes that the Committee and the EESC lost 5 000 m ² in office space following the take-over of the rental contract of the former EEAS building at Belliard 100 (B100), which took effect in September 2021, and the buildings exchange between the Committee and the EESC's Belliard 68 and Trèves 74 and the Commission's Van Maerlant 2 (VMA), which took effect in September 2022; notes that fitting-out works in the two newly acquired buildings were necessary to enable a denser use of the office space; welcomes the establishment, in 2022, of a joint task force on new ways of working to reflect on possible optimisation of the way work is organised and how office space is used while reducing the environmental footprint;	

43	Notes that, in 2022, the overall Committee budget for the fitting-out of premises amounted to EUR 883 792; notes that the renovation works undertaken by the Committee and the EESC on the B100 and the VMA buildings integrated the use of smart technologies with a strong environmental component; asks the Committee to provide an update on the return on investment of those technological installations, but advises caution nonetheless against entering long-term commitments on new office space before these measures are fully explored;	It is too soon to have an update on the return on investment in relation to the smart technologies installed in the VMA. In the B100 building there were no smart technologies installed as the building is rented. The smart technologies installed in the VMA require the configuration of the system parameters and it takes several months to optimise them as it is an iterative procedure. Only after 2 or 3 years of usage of these technologies an assessment can be done. In any case the CoR does not have the intention to enter in long-term commitments for new office space in the near future.
44	Notes that, in 2022, the building strategy of the Committee and the EESC focused on the geographical concentration of the buildings which was achieved by physically connecting all the buildings used by the Committee and the EESC to their main building (JDE); welcomes the new physical connection to Parliament's buildings which became operational in November 2022, offering a more direct, easier and 125 m shorter pathway between the buildings of the Committee and the EESC and the buildings of Parliament;	
45	Notes that the Committee and the EESC launched a multi-annual project related to the technical upgrade of the interpretation system for all conference rooms starting in 2022; notes that an amount of EUR 200 000 was earmarked by the Committee for this project in 2022;	
46	Welcomes the commitment of the Committee and the EESC to systematically apply the 'design for all' principle to their infrastructure, ensuring accessibility of their building by design; notes that the Committee and the EESC took a range of different measures to ensure accessibility of their buildings for people with various kinds of disabilities;	
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY		
47	Welcomes the sustainable practices and notably the paperless approach of the Committee and the EESC which contributed to reduce their environmental footprint in line with their digital strategy; notes that the Phoenix application used to support the political work of the Committee was adapted in 2022 so as to generate the carbon reports for travel and allow the Committee and the EESC to calculate their carbon balance; notes that the action plan resulting from the audit on the performance under the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) was implemented with actions in the fields of documentation, review of procedures, improvement of planning, risk management and supervision; congratulates the Committee and the EESC on having exceeded the EMAS objectives for 2021-2025, except the objectives related to gas consumption;	
48	Notes that, in 2022, the total electricity production generated by solar panels on the buildings of the Committee and the EESC was approximately 15,5 MWh, representing 0,25 % of the total yearly consumption of the Committee and the EESC; notes that, as of 16 September 2022, only the JDE was equipped with solar panels; is aware that due to administrative procedures the Committee and the EESC will face a delay before being able to extend their solar panel installation;	

49	Notes that the Committee put in place a sustainable mobility plan including a financial contribution to the public transport subscriptions of staff and awareness raising activities; notes that no new mobility staff survey was organised in 2022 but one is foreseen for 2024; welcomes the fact that 76 % of the Committee staff uses eco-friendly means of transport for commuting purposes;	
INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION		
50	Welcomes the budgetary and administrative savings achieved through interinstitutional cooperation, in particular the close cooperation established at administrative level with the EESC with which the Committee shares premises and joint services in the areas of translation, infrastructure, logistics and IT, while maintaining its full institutional autonomy; notes that, on 1 October 2022, a joint directorate for innovation and information technology was created as part of the new cooperation agreement signed between the Committee and the EESC in 2022; notes further that 470 members of staff and EUR 55 million were pooled together by the Committee and the EESC in 2022, excluding salary-related expenditure; calls on the Committee to pursue and expand that cooperation in other areas with a view to avoiding duplication and further rationalising the operating costs of services available in the premises shared by the Committee and the EESC; invites the Committee and the EESC to explore the possibility of setting up a single administration for their joint services, keeping separate directorates or units for the services dealing with matters related to their specific and independent mandates;	<p>The CoR's inter-institutional cooperation is probably one of the best developed among all EU institutions. The important example is the administrative cooperation between the CoR/EESC via the Joint Services, where in 2024 some 470 staff (some 175 staff belonging to the CoR) and some € 60 million yearly (of which more than € 25 million by the CoR) are pooled together by both institutions, excluding salary related expenditure. Together with the concerned salary related expenditure, the yearly monetary value of the Joint Services operations exceeds € 120 million.</p> <p>The Joint Services serve both institutions in the fields of translation, infrastructure, logistics and IT.</p> <p>The CoR continues the implementation of the cooperation agreement with the EESC to better optimise the use of their financial and human resources. A joint project for the centralization of the financial initiating function for the joint services has been launched in 2023 for ensuring more efficiency gains: savings in human resources, a more clear identification of the financial tasks which will allow staff to concentrate on a specific area and reducing the workload. The joint agreement on all areas impacted by the project takes time and therefore the implementation will take place gradually.</p> <p>The Secretaries General from both Committees are looking into a proposal for possible synergies of joint medical services.</p>
51	Welcomes the Committee's search for synergies by purchasing services from other institutions through service-level agreements and by participating in interinstitutional coordination bodies and interinstitutional procurement procedures;	
52	Calls on the Committee to keep explore synergies with other institutions both in terms of logistics, digital services, driver's service and other administrative tasks, as well as certain outreach and communication activities, particularly in Member States where the Committee's members have varied support networks and rely purely on the members' own local staff;	<p>For reasons of overall cost-effectiveness and inter-institutional coherence wherever relevant, most CoR departments participate in tender procedures and the ensuing framework contracts with other European institutions. This is i.a. the case in the area of logistics, information technology or communication activities.</p> <p>CoR participates in interinstitutional calls for tender whenever possible and opens some of its own calls for tender to the participation of other EU institutions. The coordination between EUI in terms of logistics is made through the interinstitutional working group ILISWG.</p> <p>CoR also collaborates closely at inter-institutional level with other EU institutions for the organisation of events and communication activities linked to Europe Day (Open Day), EuroPCom and EURegionsWeeks.</p>

53	<p>Welcomes the willingness of the Committee to further develop its cooperation with other institutions, in particular Parliament, ahead of the 2024 European elections through a roadmap predicting a further intensification of cooperation and a bigger role for the Committee and local and regional authorities in that context; notes the review of the cooperation agreements with Parliament and the Commission, as decided by the Conference of Presidents in November 2022;</p>	<p>A Memorandum of Understanding was negotiated in 2023 and signed in February 2024 between the CoR and the European Parliament on Communication in the run-up and follow-up to European elections 2024, where the CoR has a key role to play from a democratic, policy and institutional point of view.</p> <p>Through the signature, on 14 May 2024, of a new EP-CoR Cooperation Agreement, the cooperation between the CoR and EP has been further enhanced, both in strengthening the existing political (such as legislative procedures, better regulation or active subsidiarity) and administrative (organisation of CoR plenary sessions or publications of CoR opinions and resolutions) cooperation between the two assemblies and in widening the collaboration towards new forms of cooperation (e.g. European elections).</p> <p>Regarding the new EC-CoR Cooperation Agreement, signed on 20 March 2024, the cooperation of both institutions is boosted in fields such as legislative procedures and planning, thematic activities, subsidiarity and proportionality principles, multi-level governance, better regulation, communication and administrative matters.</p>
54	<p>Notes that the Committee cooperates with the Commission (for an annual fee) for the handling of HR matters and the use of various IT platforms for financial management and HR; notes that the Committee holds its plenary sessions at the premises of Parliament and the Commission to compensate for the lack of capacity of its own conference rooms and that the Committee buys interpreting services from those two institutions; notes that the Committee has been looking into the possibilities of using distant interpretation facilities in view of the fast development of that sector;</p>	<p>The CoR is making use of either the GASP meeting room of the European Commission or the Hemicycle of the EP to organise its Plenary Sessions. Remote interpretation has been agreed between CoR and EP for one session in 2024 and it will be used for two sessions in 2025. The CoR is indeed actively pursuing ways to simplify the organisation of its Plenary Session but also all other events. This increasingly included, when possible, remote interpretation.</p>
55	<p>Notes that the Committee promotes the visibility and impact of its work based on inter-institutional cooperation through targeted presentations of its reports to other institutions, e.g. presentations of 11 reports to Parliament in 2022, bilateral meetings at rapporteur level, political exchanges during formal events and conferences, targeted distribution of opinions and work in networks;</p>	<p>EuroPCom (organised with the involvement of the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council, the EESC and the EIB) 2023 was anchored in the negotiated MoU with EP on European election, and discussed communicating democracy and voters engagement.</p> <p>CoR outreach to the EP in 2023 was strengthened with joint CoR Commission and EP Committee events, e.g. NAT/ENVE in July, COTER-REGI in October on 'the future of cohesion policy'; the CoR also engaged with ITRE, AGRI and others, and engaged with the EP and JRC on the New European Bauhaus. The CoR engaged with the Council and EP in relation to trilogue negotiations, e.g. on Critical Raw Materials Package. Cooperation with the EPRS and within the ESPAS network developed further. Cooperation with the EC was strengthened in all CoR relevant policy fields, and also in particular in the area of cohesion policy, better regulation and enlargement (e.g. Ukraine).</p>
COMMUNICATION		
56	<p>Notes that, in 2022, the Committee's overall budget for communication was EUR 2,2 million, compared to EUR 2,1 million in 2021, i.e. an increase of 4 %; notes that, within that budget, approximately EUR 439 000 was used for events, EUR 795 000 for media and EUR 1 099 000 for digital communication; notes that the aim of the Committee's communication is to raise the Committee's institutional and political profile as the assembly of the Union's regions, cities, villages and municipalities and the role of its members;</p>	<p>Communication has a consistently proven capacity to deliver further activities.</p> <p>While earlier there was an increase, the communication budget has faced cuts and is 2.5% smaller in 2024 than in 2022. Furthermore, real terms erosion of purchasing power is a serious problem, with price indexation of framework contracts around 15%.</p> <p>The solution involved securing external transfers to fill the budget gap.</p>

57	<p>Notes that the Committee continued to host the regular meetings of the directors-general for communication of all Union institutions in 2022, focusing on the preparation of coordinated communication actions in the run up to the European elections in 2024; encourages the Committee to continue its support to the institutional communication campaign of Parliament for the European elections in 2024 through its local and regional networks;</p>	<p>The CoR has continued to host this unique interinstitutional forum, bringing colleagues together to coordinate “EU” communication. This has continued throughout the European elections campaign for 2024, which the CoR has also promoted through its local and regional networks.</p>
58	<p>Welcomes the data-driven communication strategy developed by the Committee to close the gap with Union citizens at local and regional levels using multiplication channels, such as the European networks of regional and local counsellors that had 2 037 registered members at the end of 2022 and the programme for young elected politicians with 775 participants in events in 2022, i.e. an increase of 15 % as compared to 2021; notes that the Committee also provided trainings and capacity building for local and regional authorities on citizen engagement and participatory democracy called ‘A new chapter for participatory democracy’; notes that, in November 2022, the bureau of the Committee invited every member to hold at least one dialogue in their constituency every year; notes that the Committee established synergies with the network of Europe Direct centres in the Member States for the organisation of local events;</p>	<p>The number of EU Councillors has increased up to 3000 thanks to the implementation of an awareness campaign launched in 2023. EU Councillors are target of regular communication actions, products.</p> <p>The EURegionsWeek workshop and political debate organised on 10-11 October 2023 brought together councillors from both the CoR and the Commission’s BELC networks with participation of the CoR President, EC Vice-President Šuica. A close cooperation with EC-DG Comm (BELC project) is ongoing with the goal to increase more and more synergies and create a common geometry in 2024. 100 EU Councillors and BELC members participated in the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities.</p> <p>The YEP programme now comprises over 800 participants from all EU Member States and, for the first time, in 2023, from all EU candidate countries as well.</p> <p>In 2023, there were 54 YEPs as speakers – more than ever before – while more than 150 participated in events and outreach activities. YEPs were also part of the A new chapter for participatory democracy, running throughout 2023 and the first half of 2024. 45 YEPs were selected for an opportunity to have hands-on trainings on citizen engagement in the democratic process. The programme was open also to CoR members, EU Councillors and other LRA stakeholders. The full YEP group also acted as a multiplier for the political activities of the CoR (e.g. through sharing key opinions, initiatives and positions of rapporteurs).</p>
59	<p>Notes that the Committee continued to implement three communication campaigns in 2022 in line with the political priorities for the 2020-2025 mandate on Bringing Europe closer to people, Building resilient regional and local communities, and Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the Union; welcomes the Committee’s efforts to extend its audience through digital communication and media outreach, with 18 890 media mentions in 2022, i.e. an increase of 20 % between 2020 and 2022;</p>	<p>The European Summits of Regions and Cities are peak communication activities for each campaign. The structure of both Summits during the current 5-year mandate (Marseille in 2022 and Mons in 2024) were based on the political priorities of the European Committee of the Regions and preparatory outreach activities were anchored in the associated campaigns.</p> <p>The EURegionsWeek continues to provide a significant boost to the communication activities of the CoR campaign ‘Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the Union’ as the biggest Brussels-based event on Cohesion Policy. The 2023 edition involved 8,418 registered participants on site and over 3,000 online, including some 600 elected representatives, 244 sessions and 220 workshops.</p>

60	<p>Notes that, at the end of 2022, the Committee had 175 000 followers on its social media channels, i.e. 16 % more than in 2021, of which 54 800 followers (an increase of 8 %) on X (formerly Twitter), 58 100 (an increase of 6 %) on Facebook, 52 100 (an increase of 33 %) on LinkedIn and 10 500 (an increase of 67 %) on Instagram;</p>	<p>At the end of Q1 2024 the CoR had over 200 000 followers, 15% more than at the end of 2022.</p> <p>Out of these</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57 603 (an increase of 5%) followers on X, • 61 170 (an increase of 5%) on Facebook, • 15 392 (an increase of 47%) on Instagram, • 68 613 (an increase of 31%) on LinkedIn and • 3052 on Threads (newly launched). <p>The CoR also coordinated an inter-institutional survey on the current state of play of social media ahead of the European Elections with the participation of 13 EUIBA.</p>
61	<p>Notes that the Committee contributes to the open data portal of the Commission with datasets on members' data and opinion data but also uses and promotes open data among local and regional authorities, thus endorsing greater transparency in its operations through freely accessible data in human and machine-readable formats and strengthening its link with citizens.</p>	



European Committee of the Regions

© European Union, 2024



Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective copyright holders. Accordingly, you are required to clear additional rights if a specific content includes third-party works. Where permission is obtained, such permission shall cancel and replace the above-mentioned general permission and shall clearly indicate any restrictions on use.

Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

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

Brussels, May 2024

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 101 | 1040 Bruxelles/Brussel | BELGIQUE/BELGIË
Tel. +32 22822211 | e-mail: visuals@cor.europa.eu | www.cor.europa.eu
 @EU_CoR |  /european.committee.of.the.regions
 /european-committee-of-the-regions |  @EU_regions_cities



Web
QG-02-24-574-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-895-3489-5
DOI 10.2863/216773